TESTS: Honda VF400F, Yamaha XJ900 Seca, White Bros. Formula 4 Floater, Honda VF750S Sabre, Kawasaki KX250

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CYCLE GUIDE

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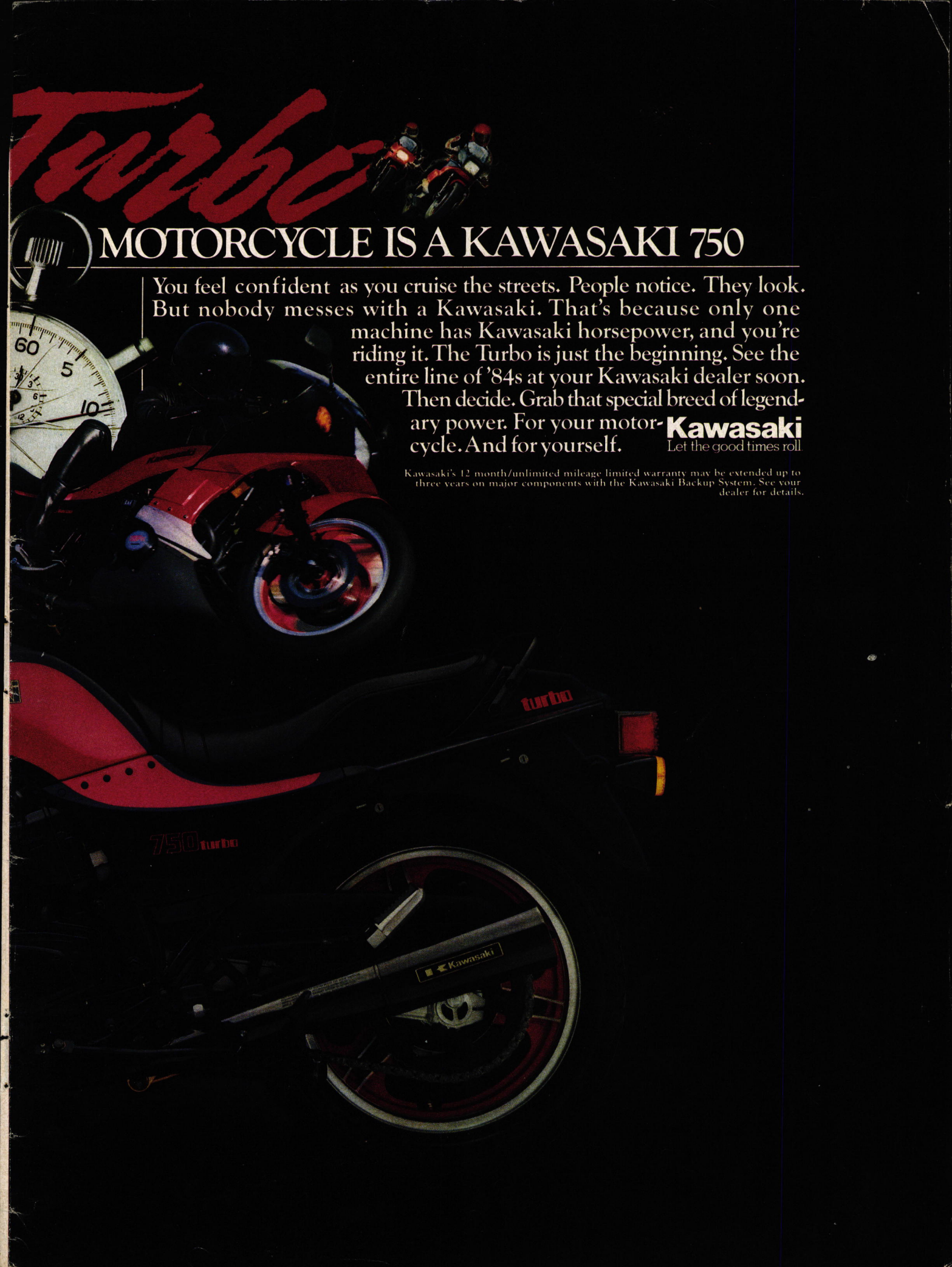
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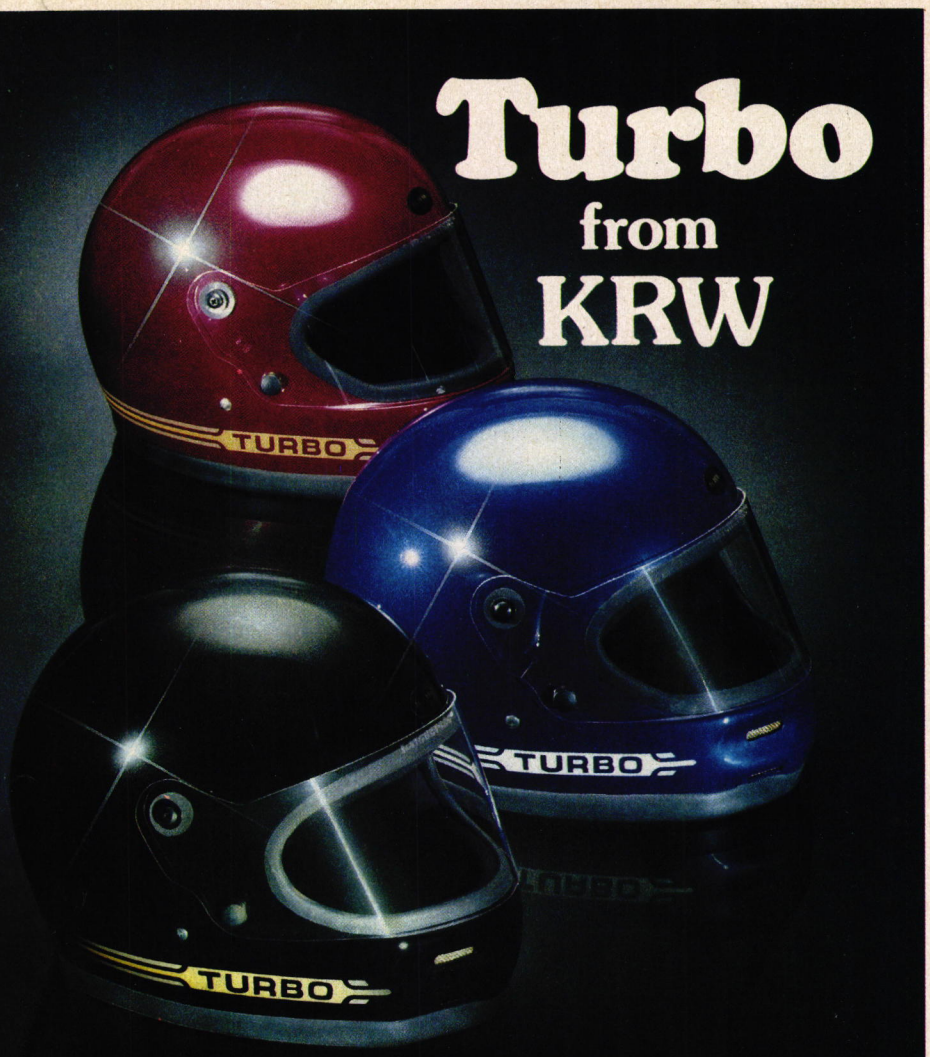

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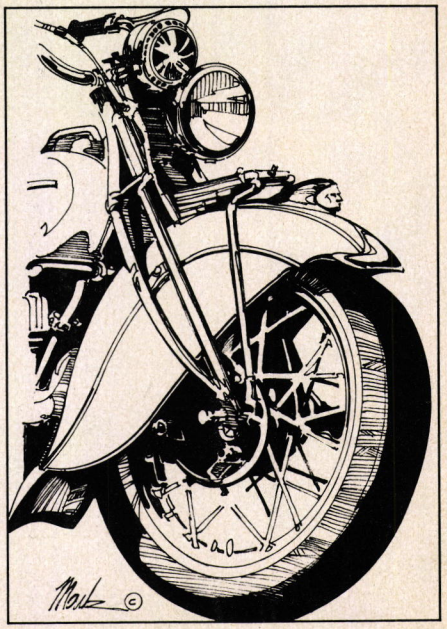

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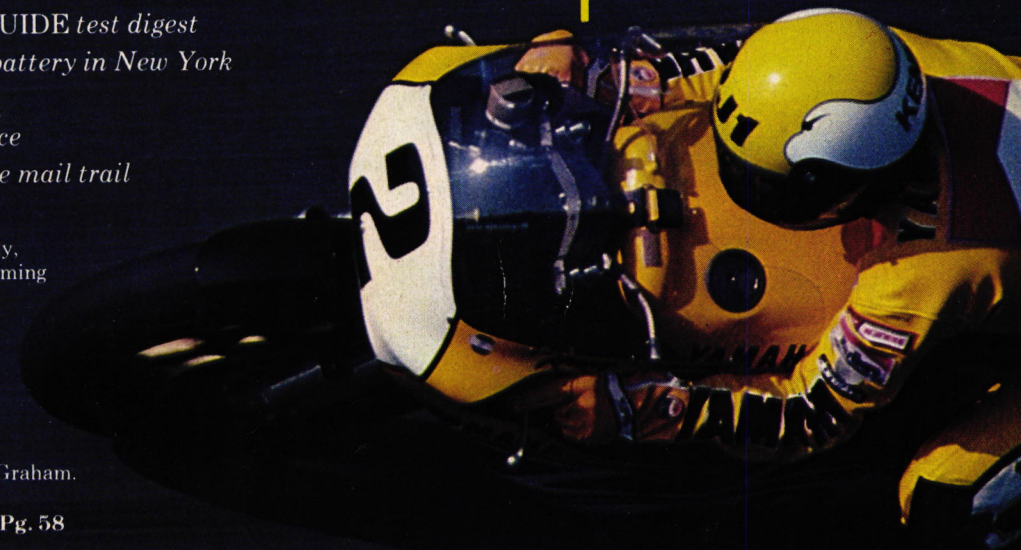
ON THE COVER:
You had better grab your helmet and get ready, because Honda's lightweight vee-four is screaming its way stateside. It's 12,500 rpm of asphalt assault weaponry and it's guaranteed to tickle your right wrist and overrev your lustometer. Charles Everitt demonstrates the symptoms in front of David Dewhurst's camera.

QUOTE:
" 'It's always better with only two guys,' said Graham. 'Three or more and it gets slow.' "
—Pg. 58



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OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Can-Am Sonic MX-'83	January '83	Motocross	Four-stroke	11.6/12.1	272	28.0/4.24	5
Can-Am 500MX-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.0	250	28.0/4.24	5
Honda CR125R-'83	April '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.9/12.3	193	27.2/4.13	6
Honda CR250R-'83	February '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.2	217	26.8/4.06	5
Honda CR480R-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	12.0/12.3	226	26.0/3.86	5
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda ATC200X-'83	August '83	ATV	Four-stroke	7.2/6.2	285	N/A	5
Husqvarna 250CR-'83	January '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.7	227	30.0/5.51	6
Husqvarna 430WR-'83	June '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.4/10.6	246	30.0/5.98	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.8	240	30.0/5.51	4
Kawasaki KDX200-'83	July '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	9.8/11.0	213	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX250-'83	September '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.1	224	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
KTM MC 495-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.4	249	28.0/4.21	4
Maico 490 E-'83	December '82	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.9/12.6	261	27.5/4.60	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki RM125-'82	November '82	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.6	197	29.5/4.76	6
Suzuki RM250-'83	February '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.7/12.4	219	29.7/4.84	5
Suzuki RM500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.8	234	29.7/4.84	4
Yamaha YZ250-'83	March '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.3	217	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	227	28.5/4.72	4
Yamaha TT600K-'83	August '83	Trail	Four-stroke	11.7/10.8	280	28.0/4.65	5

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R65 LS-'82	April '82	2C/G	649.6	14.153/92.40	109	417	35–50	138
BMW R100RT-'82	May '82	2C/G	979.9	13.862/95.13	126	523	35–50	148
H-D FLH Classic-'82	August '82	45 deg. 2D/F	1338.6	15.467/82.04	101	752	32–42	180
H-D FXRS-'82	December '81	45 deg. 2D/F	1338.6	13.917/93.07	109	594	40–47	124
H-D XLS Roadster-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.842/93.94	106	515	43–55	138
H-D XLX-61-'83	June '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.459/95.94	106	488	40–72	128
Honda VF400F-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/F	399.1	13.588/96.35	112	402	34–51	127
Honda CBX400F-'82	October '82	4A/F	399.1	13.588/96.46	110	402	34–58	128
Honda CB1100F-'83	January '83	4A/F	1062.2	11.224/119.84	144	550	33–46	135
Honda CX650 Custom-'83	May '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.560/102.97	119	454	38–48	124
Honda CX650 Turbo-'83	March '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.093/111.66	137	538	25–44	124
Honda FT500 Ascot-'82	August '82	1 B/F	497.7	14.915/83.72	97	360	47–54	146
Honda GL1100-'82	April '82	4C/G	1085.0	12.613/106.50	139	606	41–49	N/A
Honda GL1100A Aspencade-'83	February '83	4C/G	1085.0	13.515/96.05	152	752	32–46	131
Honda GL1100I Interstate-'82	April '82	4C/G	1085.0	13.309/99.55	139	697	40–50	N/A
Honda Nighthawk 550-'83	July '83	4A/G	572.3	12.461/102.97	114	429	37–49	125
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	December '83	4A/G	656.0	12.287/108.04	122	451	29–51	127
Honda Nighthawk 750-'82	March '82	4A/F	748.7	12.741/103.80	131	543	36–49	128
Honda V45 Interceptor-'83	May '83	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.963/111.66	138	511	31–40	116
Honda V45 Magna-'82	June '82	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.344/105.88	129	507	30–46	124
Honda V45 Sabre-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.179/111.11	128	514	33–46	130
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/G	749.6	12.906/100.78	127	484	48–55	132
Kawasaki GPz550-'83	June '83	4A/F	553.8	12.647/102.97	132	438	42–62	144
Kawasaki GPz750-'83	February '83	4A/F	739.0	12.167/109.22	134	498	35–51	136
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	July '83	4A/F	739.0	11.225/123.53	146	514	N/A	N/A
Kawasaki GPz1100-'82	May '82	4A/F	1089.8	11.328/119.36	137	534	35–48	127
Kawasaki KZ550 Spectre-'83	May '83	4A/G	553.8	13.348/96.77	116	441	44–56	137
Kawasaki KZ750-L3-'83	January '83	4A/F	739.0	12.095/108.95	134	487	47–53	132
Kawasaki KZ750 LTD-'82	December '82	4A/F	739.0	12.564/105.38	131	474	41–55	131
Kawasaki KZ1000R-'82	November '82	4A/F	998.6	11.849/116.73	134	505	35–49	129
Kawasaki KZ1100 Spectre-'82	March '82	4A/G	1089.8	11.960/110.42	142	553	30–44	132
Suzuki GS450E-'83	January '83	2A/F	448.2	14.236/93.16	106	384	39–49	131
Suzuki GS450G Automatic-'83	February '83	2A/G	448.2	16.412/82.34	94	410	36–59	143
Suzuki GS550E-'83	June '83	4A/F	572.3	12.593/104.04	120	443	39–47	135
Suzuki GS750E-'83	August '83	4A/F	747.4	11.893/112.92	131	485	35–50	135
Suzuki GS1000S Katana-'81	December '81	4A/F	997.5	11.397/118.70	141	525	33–51	129
Suzuki GS1100E-'82	May '82	4A/F	1074.9	11.203/119.30	141	530	37–49	132
Suzuki GS1100G-'82	September '82	4A/G	1074.9	11.919/114.21	137	555	42–48	138
Suzuki GS1100GK-'82	October '82	4A/G	1074.9	12.579/104.52	137	647	31–44	155
Suzuki XN85 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/F	673.9	12.381/107.14	132	521	34–46	120
Yamaha XS400 Seca-'82	December '82	2A/F	399.4	14.589/89.28	110	382	47–57	140
Yamaha XJ650 Seca-'82	September '82	4A/G	653.4	12.830/103.44	125	469	44–59	135
Yamaha XJ650 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/G	653.4	13.059/103.32	126	543	35–53	126
Yamaha XS400 Maxim-'82	November '82	2A/F	399.4	14.651/88.06	104	376	52–61	136
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	April '83	75 deg. 2D/G	920.0	12.835/101.46	108	503	38–45	138
Yamaha XJ900 Seca-'83	September '83	4A/G	853.2	11.949/113.20	128	499	34–58	135

*A-Transverse Vertical, B-Vertical (single-cylinder only), C-Horizontally Opposed, D-Tandem Vee, E-Transverse Vee, F-Chain Final Drive, G-Shaft Final Drive, H-Belt Final Drive

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West's Side

Bikes Я Us

Of amphibious bikes, chickens with horns, and batteries on the moon . . . .

• First, you have to understand that New York is not like where you live.

Then, you have to understand that New York is even *less* like where you live than you can possibly imagine.

Buying a pack of gum here can be a challenge; renting a slice of apple pie can be reckless derring-do. But when something truly calamitous happens—like needing a new motorcycle battery—well, it can bring your whole life to a halt.

I'd let my old XT500 sit uncranked for entirely too many winters one year, until one cold February night the battery plates got together and said, "Okay, scroom—he don't care about us, we ain't gonna care about him." And when I put a charger on them, they stuck to their guns. *Scroom*!

No big deal, you might think. Just go buy another battery, deadass.

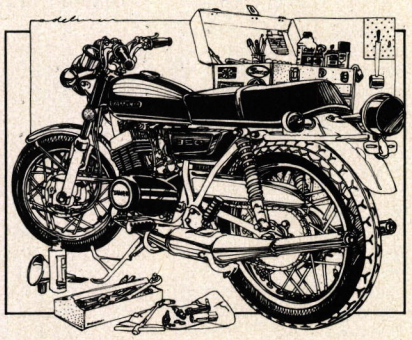
You might think that where you live, but in New York you mull it over a good while first. Say, four or five months. Then you call a bike shop and ask what they get for an XT500 battery. If you should call a certain establishment downtown and you get exactly the right schmuck on the phone, he'll quote you a price of $65. Sixty-five dollars for a battery that earthmen sell for $19!

That call took place after four or five months . . . one full year ago. I was so nonplussed that an entire year passed before I would risk another such insult to my intelligence. But last week I realized that paying $70 per month garage rent—see, I *told* you New York is not like where you live!—to store a motorcycle with a dead battery doesn't make real neat logic.

So grabbing the bull by the turnsignals, I decided to give it one more try. This time I called a shop way *uptown*. They didn't have the right battery . . . of course . . . but they would have it for me in four days. I made the mistake of waiting five days and was immediately out of all danger of getting an XT500 battery from *that* shop.

But as luck would have it, that very day another monthly garage bill arrived in the mail. No escaping it, I was determined now to *do* something—if only to wheel my XT over to the East River and teach it to swim.

Well, the truth is, I don't have any idea why I didn't go to this place in the beginning—I never had anything bad



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happen to me there, the people have always been friendly enough, the service reasonably efficient. The place is called Camrod (on one floor) and Outrider (on the other floor). As I say, there seems no good reason why I didn't go there in the first place, and yet, there's just something very intimidating about it. It's just *too New York*! I mean, who ever trusted a bike shop that had two stories? And if there's carpet on the floor . . . well, we got off at the wrong planet.

Yet I didn't seem to have a choice. I'd already tried shops that *looked* right—one had offered to charge 350 percent of the battery's market value, the other had no idea why anyone would even *want* such an item! I could go right on paying $70 a month to store my two-wheeled oil, gas and air container, or I could confront Camrod/Outrider—or as I call it, Bikes Я Us.

See, that's exactly what Camrod/Outrider feels like. It's the F.A.O. Schwartz of motorcycle shops. Located right in midtown Manhattan on W. 57th St., its ground floor is the usual gearcase-to-gearcase daisy-chain of new motorcycles for sale, brand after brand after brand of them. That's not so terribly odd, but it's when you go upstairs that things get exotic. Here you find a complete motorcycle Department Store. There are no less than three separate long counters, each manned (sometimes) by its own staff. You can go to the light accessories counter and buy helmets, visors, chain lube and the like. (Which I did.) Then you can graduate to the welterweight accessories counter and buy trickle-chargers and saddlebags and racks and the like. (Which I did.) And then you go all the way back to the Third World Parts & Supply Dept. and buy valves, pistons, wheel bearings . . . and even XT500 batteries. (Which I *did*, I *did*!)

All this takes some getting used to, of course. But despite the two stories and three counters and the carpet on the floor, after awhile the place began to look a little more "right." The people I saw definitely belonged in a bike shop—there were plenty of faded blue jeans with white threads hanging down from the cuffs. And they all had that ambling doan-gimme-yer-crap swagger that arrives at every parts desk with the first shipment of spare clutch discs. It began to seem familiar. I got braver.

So I popped the question.

See, one of the things I get for my $70 a month at the garage is the privilege of replacing a stolen rearview mirror from time to time after some disgruntled biker moves out of the garage and decides to take something with him. Past experience, however, had taught me that walking into a parts house and asking for a replacement mirror for a '77 XT500—the *right* replacement—is usually good for a fast doan-gimme-yer-crap-next-customer-please sneer. But with my new battery and charger and visor already tucked safely under my arm, I figured they couldn't hurt me too bad if I asked. The guy gave me an off-center grin, looked it up on the microfiche, shaking his head all the while. I know, I know, I thought. It's like asking for a matched set of chicken antlers.

The guy came back, frowning darkly. He didn't think he had the mirror . . . but wait a sec, he'd check. He went into the parts room and I stood there waiting for the inevitable no-way-bubba. A minute passed, two. Four minutes passed. Then suddenly, back came the guy, eyes big as ostrich eggs. "Never even *seen* one before!" he said. "Can't bleeve it, can't bleeve it!" In his hand was—yes, brethren—one left-side 1977 XT500 rearview.

And by now, I *could* bleeve it. See, that's what this place is like, a toy store—F.A.O. Schwartz, Macy's Basement and your local "Chip's Yamahondazukisaki" all rolled into one. Makes you want to go back . . . even *voluntarily*!

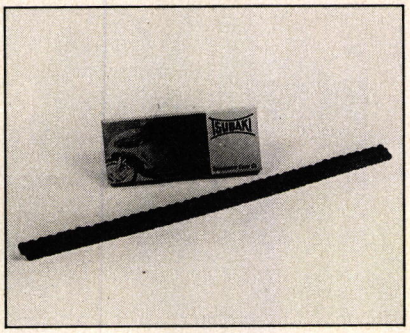
In fact, soon as I'm done with this column, I think I'll go down there this afternoon. Look for something to buy. Maybe that sounds childish—but then, what would you expect of a bike kid turned loose in Bikes Я Us? —*Ted West*

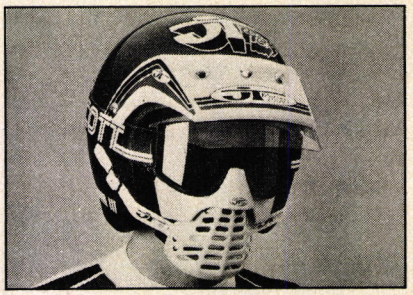
Motomart

Retail details.

Renegade Shields: Well, they're Maverick faceshields, actually, offered by MXL Products. And MXL claims the Maverick line of shields uses a special grade of polycarbonate to provide superior optical clarity. The shields are available with MXL's exclusive FogEater coating, or with an HFS (Hard Finish Surface) treatment, in clear, black chrome or a gradient tint. Suggested retail prices for the shields range from $13.99 to $15.99. To find out more, consult a motorcycle dealer or contact MXL Products, National Hydron Inc., Dept. CG, 1764 Roherstown Road, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17601.

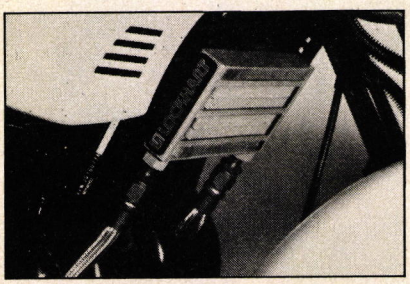
Back on the Chain Gang: Sudco International now has Tsubaki Super Chain, the same brand used by Kawasaki and Eddie Lawson in winning the 1982 Superbike championship. Tsubaki chain comes in two versions: the "QR" roller chain with solid rollers, shot-peened parts and heavy press-fit pins; and the "HSL" self-lube chain with extra-heavy link plates and sintered metal bushings impregnated with a special lubricant. For more information on sizes and retail prices, see your motorcycle dealer or write to Sudco International Corp., Dept. CG, 1824 E. 2nd St., Los Angeles, California 90058.

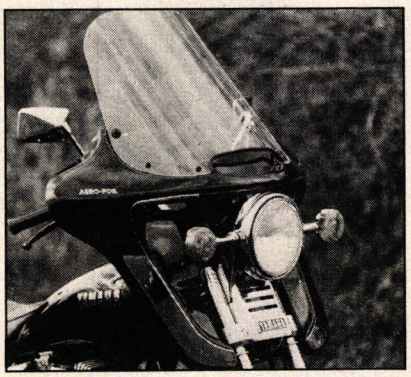




Face Dances: Any motocrosser can tell you that catching a rocky roost full in the face can break more than just your concentration. And in recognition of this, J.T. Racing now offers the Modular Face-Protection System, consisting of the J.T. Half Mask, Mouthtrap and Add-Visor. The Half Mask, which has a suggested retail price of $5.95, covers the upper nose and cheek area, while the Mouthtrap, which retails for $8.95, protects the nose, mouth and chin. The Add-Visor comes with smoke and clear extender-shields and retails for $8.95. To find out more, write J.T. Racing U.S.A., Dept. CG, 303 W. 35th St., Suite D, National City, California 92050.

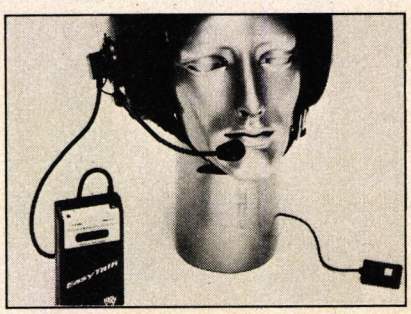
Make Your Oil Shiver: Summer isn't over yet, and neither are the high temperatures that come with it, temperatures that can hasten the breakdown of your bike's oil. To combat that, though, you can fit one of Lockhart's Competition Series Racing Oil Cooler kits. Each cooler features Lockhart's patented internally finned passages to promote even-cooling, and a Kal-Gard Gun Kote finish for increased heat dissipation. The kits come complete with all mounting hardware and pre-cut stainless steel braided hose, for a suggested retail price of $179.95. To find out more, write Lockhart Consumer Products, Dept. CG, 15557 Texaco St., Paramount, California 90723.





Belly Up to the Cast-Aluminum Bars: Cast-aluminum handlebars seem to be all the rage these days, but they can make fairing installation difficult. Pacifico Inc., however, now offers adaptors to allow mounting the firm's Aero-Foil fairing to Yamaha's 1100 Maxim and Honda's 750 Sabre, to name only two of the available applications. The adaptors thread into the bike's rearview mirror mounts, and retail for $5 a pair. To find out more, contact Pacifico Inc., Dept. CG, 1625 S.E. Hogan Road, Gresham, Oregon 97030; (503) 666-5502.

Open Channel "B": It's difficult to communicate with your passenger or riding partner using cryptic hand-signals, but Nady Systems can simplify the problem with its PRC-1XM and PRC-1XMi Motorcycle Radio Communicators. Both allow rider-to-rider communication, while the PRC-1XMi is equipped with an intercom. The transceivers allow either voice-operated or push-to-talk control, and can be fitted to open- or full-face helmets. Suggested retail prices are $89.95 for the PRC-1XM and $109.95 for the XMi version. To find out more, contact Nady Systems, Dept. CG, 1145 65th St., Oakland, California 94608-1175; (415) 652-7632.



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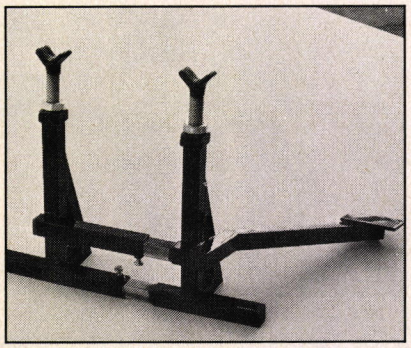
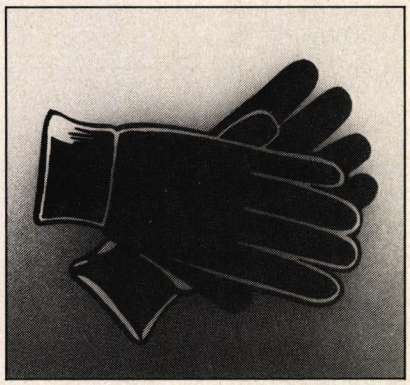
Motomart

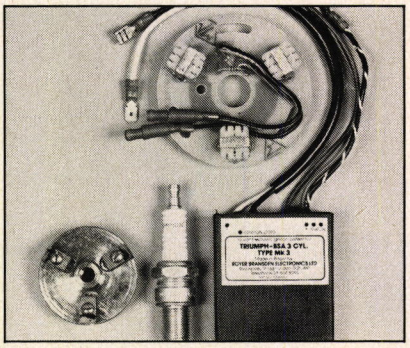
More retail details.



Standing Room Only: Liberating a milk crate from the local grocery store comes under the heading of misdemeanor theft, so to keep from answering some embarrassing questions, you might consider Avenger Product's Race Mate stand. Avenger Products claims the fully adjustable stand has been tested to support more than 500 pounds, and the rubber-covered base prevents slippage. Suggested retail price of the Race Mate for dirtbikes is $44.95, while the streetbike version is $49.95. To find out more, contact Avenger Products, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 2174, San Antonio, Texas 78148.

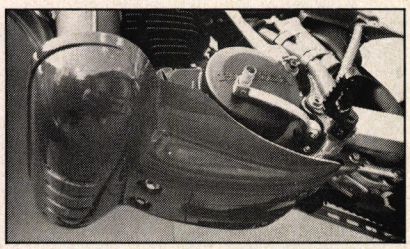
Silk-short Civility: Well, after a fashion. Actually, these are pure-silk glove-liners, for use under normal riding gloves when heavy winter mitts are just too much. Silk is an efficient, lightweight insulator that works—even when wet—by trapping a thin layer of air near the body. The glove liners are available in black only, in Small, Medium and Large sizes. Suggested retail price is $10 per pair. For more information, write to Beach's Motorcycle Adventures Ltd., Dept. CG, Box 36, Dept. #5, 2763 West River Pkwy., Grand Island, New York 14072.





Fresh Spark: It's not for nothing that Joseph Lucas is known as the Prince of Darkness, so if the ignition on your Britbike has gone belly-up, British Marketing can provide an alternative. With the Boyer Brandsen electronic ignition, spark advance is electronically controlled; kits are available to fit most single-, twin- or three-cylinder motorcycles of British extraction. Suggested retail price is $148 for each kit. To find out more, contact British Marketing, Dept. CG, 32122 Paseo Adelanto 9B, P.O. Box 219, San Juan Capistrano, California 92693.

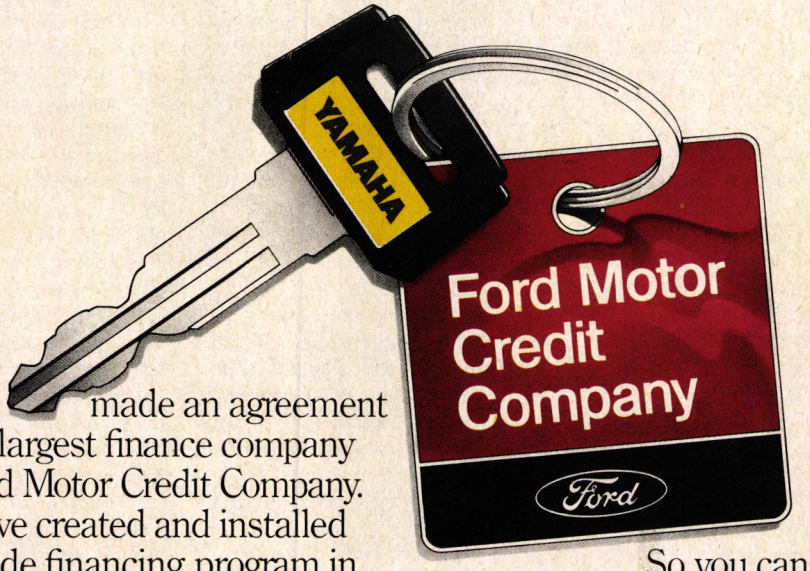
Ten Toes Up: Motocrossers can put their best feet forward—or anywhere else, for that matter—in O'Neal Ultra-Lite boots. Ultra-Lites utilize leather for the foot casing, a semi-rigid polymer plastic shin-guard and soft, injection-molded plastic for the back of the calf. Flexible leather patches in front and back allow natural ankle movement, and all seams are triple-stitched. Ultra-Lites are available in red/blue, red/yellow, blue/yellow and black/yellow, in sizes 5–13 for a suggested retail price of $139. To find out more, contact O'Neal U.S.A., Dept. CG, 9555 Owensmouth Ave., Chatsworth, California 91311.



Better Living Through Plastic: Skidplates are cheap insurance, and if you need convincing just check the price of a new pipe or a set of engine cases. But Belcher Designs' plastic skidplate can protect those expensive components; it wraps around the head pipe and up to the sidecovers, with slots cut in it to drain mud and water. Mounting bolts are recessed and the plate's color matches the bike's frame. Suggested retail price is $59.95, and the plates are available for 1983-model 250 and 490 Maico Spiders, 250 and 500 Huskys, 250 and 490 IT Yamahas, 250 and 480 CR Hondas and 200 and 250 KDX Kawasakis. For more information, write Belcher Designs, Dept. CG, 905 Palmwood Drive, Boise, Idaho 83709.

Wet Suit: On those stormy Mondays, or any other day it's raining, stay dry in Carfel's one- or two-piece rainsuits. The suits are made of heavy PVC (with heat-sealed seams) or rubberized nylon (doubled-stitched, heat-taped seams). Two-piece suits are available in yellow, orange, blue or black, with reflective stripes; one-piecers come in yellow or black, also with reflective striping. Hoods and carrying cases are included, and sizes range from S through XL. To find out more, contact Carfel Inc., Dept. CG, 7495 NW 48th St., Miami, Florida 33166.

Yamahas now come fully equipped with financing.



Yamaha has just made an agreement with the second largest finance company in the world. Ford Motor Credit Company.

Together we've created and installed the first nationwide financing program in motorcycle history.

That can make it easier to find financing after you've found your Yamaha.

Because now your participating Yamaha dealer can handle it. Only if you want him to, of course.

If you choose, he can also arrange for your insurance, through K&K Insurance Co. And he can usually include the collision part of the premium in your finance package. (Even if you get insurance through your own agent.) Bolt-on accessories can be part of the package too.

So you can just write out one check a month that covers it all.

If you qualify, you can finance $2,000 or more through Ford Credit, on all street-legal Yamahas of 400cc's or over.

Which makes them the first motorcycles anywhere to come with the one thing you couldn't get before.

Everything.

YAMAHA

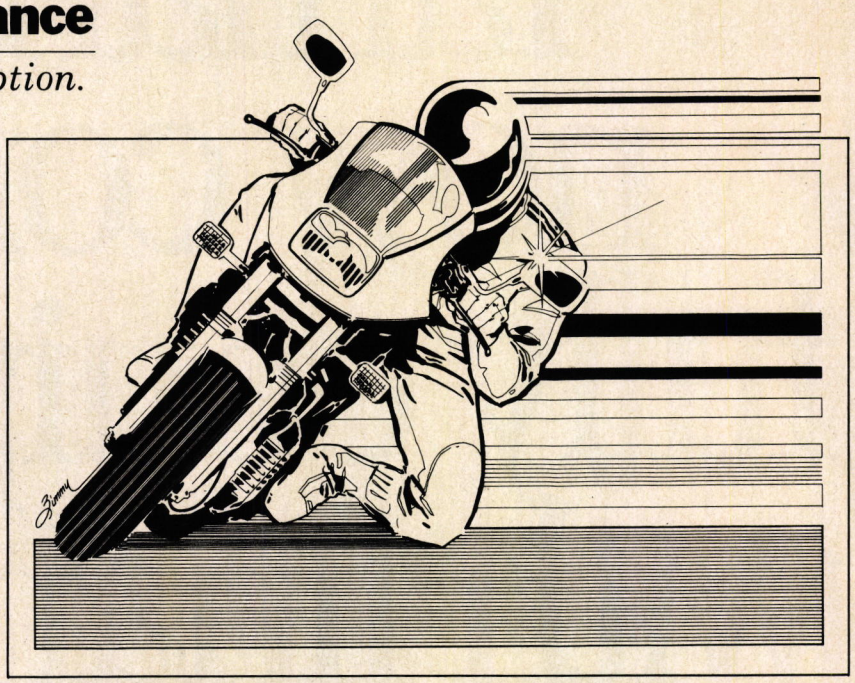
THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.™

Ford Credit financing available to qualified buyers at participating Yamaha dealers only. See your dealer for complete details.

Contact Points

Tubular Performance

Adjusting for better reception.



• Grumbling about television advertising is an old pastime. These days, when most TV commercials are made to much higher standards than the programs, some advertisers stick to the old style: slapstick hokum and soap-opera drivel.

Motorcycle advertising is fairly new to the video airwaves, but already there is the rising lament over some of its approaches. It's not that the bike spots are bad, at least not in the sense of old groaners like squeezeable toilet paper or waxy yellow buildup. The focus of complaints leveled at today's moto-ads centers less on style than on content. Or, more specifically, on just how that content might be perceived by the non-motorcycling viewer, legislators included. The issues are sex, violence and speed, a triad that some folks simply don't correlate with truth, justice and the American way. Never mind the historical evidence.

In the September '82 issue of *Cycle Guide,* a guest editorial by Mary Alice Kellogg fired a broadside at the current generation of TV motorcycle ads. They are, she charged, unnecessarily macho, sinister, sexist and anti-social, with disturbing undertones of sadomasochism. Some readers responded that perhaps Ms. Kellogg was projecting some of her own kinky fantasies into the tube. Be that as it may or may not, some serious questions were raised by her complaint. Questions that are now bouncing around motorcycle-industry boardrooms and ad-agency conference tables.

I think it would be instructive here to review the recent history of TV's two-wheeler billboards, in the hope of getting a fix on this revival of righteous concern over the so-called "image" of motorcycling. In 1981, when the global recession was a bit less acute, the Japanese Big Four were engaged in a spending war. They all applied enormous budgets to both print and video ads, with themes ranging from fun, adventure and leadership to economy and reliability. Neither the bold, high-performance pitch nor the Badboy Butch portrait figured strongly in the ad campaigns.

But the following year, '82, was hardly a benchmark for motorcycle sales in the U.S. A new marketing strategy was obviously in order. This year the thrust of the new attack became apparent; hand-to-hand combat in the high-performance theater. Honda is obviously on the video battlefront to win, buying big chunks of expensive airtime in prime time. Yamaha has chosen to engage only in the occasional skirmish at the national level, while Kawasaki and Suzuki are apparently regrouping.

So, what's the beef? Seems people fear that this is a transition from the theme of Luke Skywalker wholesomeness to Darth Vader throttle-thrills that could provoke public outrage. And restrictive intervention by the government. Show enough curve-strafing on television, the rationale goes, and the federal protectors will ration horsepower. From that premise, it's an easy leap to the conclusion that we, the hip enthusiasts, should keep the hyperformance proclivities to ourselves. Maintain a low media profile and the powers that be will let us be.

Hogsquat. Specious logic, at best. I'm not advocating ads that encourage knee-dragging blitzes through the city streets. But racetrack technology has enhanced nearly every component of today's road bikes, including the safety factor. And self-censorship, even only on TV, will serve neither the customer nor the manufacturer. Nor the public interest.

There's no denying that television has long been parroting B-movies in the portrayal of motorcycling. Too often the handy cliché is substituted for creative imagination. But now, if only in some commercials and occasional race coverage, the tube begins to glimmer with at least a bit of clarity. And on balance, I would nominate Honda for both the hardware and software awards this year. Because they've matched their engineering Oscar, the Interceptor, with a corresponding improvement in the art of televised motorcycle advertising.

Recently the major moto-mags, this one included, displayed their titles and leathers in a TV spot for the Nighthawk 650. The commercial, shot at the Willow Springs racetrack, is a gracefully stylish piece of video production. Compared to the spot showing a Mazda coupe drifting through the esses on a mountain road, the Honda effort is a model of propriety.

I would hope to see even more high-performance spots on TV, including race/win ads. But I'd also like seeing Kenny Roberts and Freddie Spencer offer cautionary advice in prime-time slots, not just in obscure public-service announcements. If racing can improve the breed, in terms of better machines, so can it contribute to increased rider ability and awareness.

Safety-consciousness is still an important issue in this sport. But it will not be elevated by restricting ads to stale listings of mileage figures and ergo-conveniences, for either motorcycles or cars. Cranking up the safety index closer to where it should be involves solid programs; rider education in high school, more good works by the MSF, MIC and AMA. And television can and should play an effective role in that campaign.

—T.J. Rafferty

GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY JOE KRESS

COMING SOON

• For most of the industry, new-model introductions still are a few months off. Laverda, however, isn't waiting and has just released two new versions of its Jota 1000. The top-of-the-line Laverda now is the RGS Corsa, a super-tuned, super-sport version of last year's RGS1000. The Corsa's mechanical specifications are much the same as the existing RGS's. The new bike's engine, however, is not quite the same; it's undergone some serious speed-tuning, aimed at increasing top speed and acceleration for the Corsa. Braking performance hasn't been overlooked on the newest Laverda, either; the machine uses Brembo Goldlines. And, in an effort to keep weight to a minimum, the RGS Corsa employs magnesium components wherever possible.

• Laverda's other new release, introduced along with the Corsa, should be a hit with the hardcore Jota-fanatics. The RGA1000 has all the high-performance bits used on the Corsa, but its styling is closer to that of the traditional Jota. And the RGA, like the Corsa, offers the choice of either a solo or two-up saddle for either pure-sport or sport-touring use.

• Sport touring, Italian-style, isn't limited to Laverda; Moto Guzzi has just released another entry into this field: the 850 T5. This 844cc vee-twin uses 30mm Dell'Ortos and a 9.5:1 compression ratio to make its 67 horsepower. The 850 T5 gets up to speed through a five-ratio transmission, and is hauled back down by triple Brembo disc brakes. There's nothing stodgy about this Italian, either; from its quarter fairing to its cast wheels, the T5 is 1984-modern.

• Just mention the designation "V65," and, immediately, visions of Honda's doomsday machine thunder into focus. Not this time, though; this V65 is Moto Guzzi's other new model, a custom-styled machine based the company's 650cc touring bike. Styled in much the same vein as Moto Guzzi's 1000cc, American-style tourer, the California, the V65 Custom comes with a teardrop tank, raised handlebar and mildly stepped seat. And the standard-equipment saddlebags make it one Custom for the road.

• And if that road happens to go through Spain, there isn't much chance of being caught by the police; they'll be riding 250s. The TE250 Guardia Urbana, just introduced by Ossamoto, might soon be the standard mount for Spanish inner-city police. With Sanglas no longer offering its 500cc engine to the Spanish police (a result of Sanglas' 1983 merger with Yamaha), Ossamoto hopes to garner a substantial amount of police business with its two-stroke Ossa-powered bike. The TE250 comes with electric starting, a five-speed gearbox, a fairing and all the bells and whistles police duty requires. But, while it would be no contest on the open highway, the TE looks like it would be tough to shake in a congested, downtown district.

• Montesa hopes its new enduro bike is just as tough to shake in the woods. The just-released 250 H7, which looks a lot like Montesa's larger, 360 H7 model, was developed with the help of the company's National Enduro Champion, Carlos Mas. The bike's reed-valve-equipped two-stroke has an extremely wide powerband, and a six-speed

Continued

There's a new king of the hill in Laverda's three-cylinder line

The RGS1000 Corsa claims the title.

All of Laverda's newfound performance wasn't limited to the Corsa

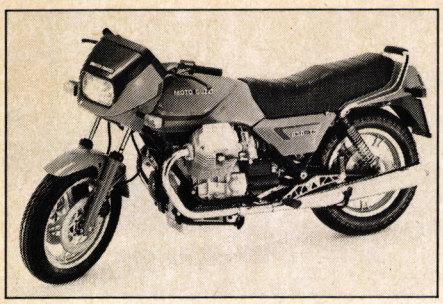
The RGA1000, the other new bike from that Italian company, got some, too.

THE NIGHT... MAGICALLY CLEAR, FOR THAT PERFECT RIDE.
YOU MOVE OUT FAST IN YOUR SIMPSON 32.

DISAPPEARING LIGHTS. TUCK THROUGH THE RUSH OF QUICK WIND AND FEEL THAT FIT. SO LIGHT. SO RIGHT. WITH AN OPTICALLY MOLDED SHIELD THAT CLICKS DOWN WITH A FINGER'S TOUCH. SNELL '80 CERTIFICATION. AND THAT NOW CLASSIC SIMPSON STYLE AND FINISH, WHICH QUITE SIMPLY LEAVES THE OTHERS IN THE DARK...

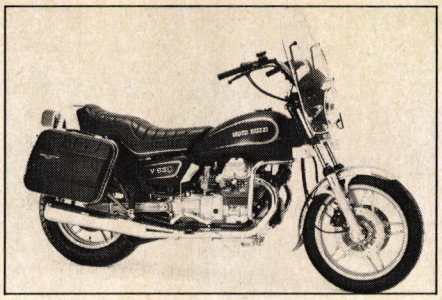
SIMPSON

SIMPSON HELMETS ARE WORN BY CHAMPIONS IN EVERY FORM OF MOTORSPORT.
22630 S. NORMANDIE AVE., TORRANCE, CA 90502 (213) 320-2204



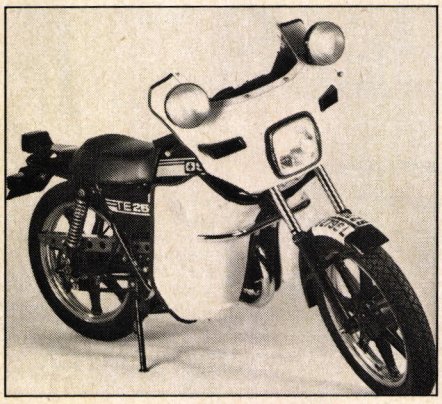
Sport-touring is an Italian tradition

And the new Guzzi 850T5 extends it.



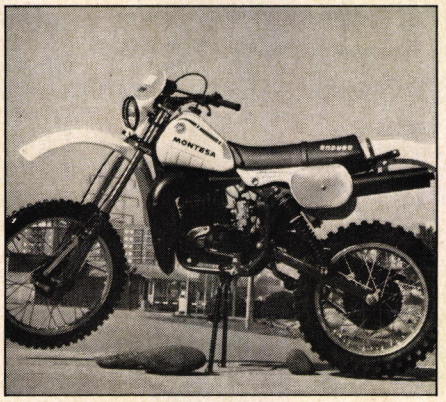
V65 Custom means more than just Magna

Here it's Moto Guzzi's 650cc twin.



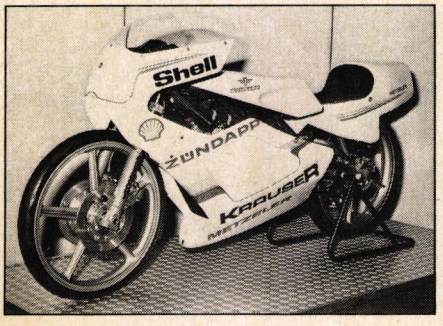
The Spanish police do things differently

Like using 250cc copbikes.



Montesa's downsized enduro bike

Down in size, not in power.



Zundapp is back after almost 20 years

Returning to small-bore roadracing.

The newest Hesketh comes with a warning:

Don't turn your back on a Vampire.

transmission to put that power to good use. The 250 H7 uses a Marzocchi fork at the front and twin Betorshocks for its rear suspension. Just how successful Montesa and Mas were in the design of the 250 H7 remains to be seen; the bike has yet to see competition.

• A racer from West Germany already has seen competition, though. Zundapp's RSM80GP bike, debuted earlier this year, is contesting the 80cc World Championship Series. This is the first roadracing series Zundapp has entered since 1965, a year the company posted a number of records with its fully streamlined 50cc racer. So far, the RSM80 has been a testing-the-waters effort; the factory is expected to step up its effort for '84. Hubert Abold, Germany's 1982 125cc champion, already has been signed as next year's rider.

• And now there are two. Models of the Hesketh, that is; Lord Alexander has just announced a second version of his vee-twin-powered specialty machine. The Vampire, a sport-fairing-equipped Hesketh V1000, is offered in two versions. The standard model comes with a black-painted frame, while Hesketh also offers a Vampire with a nickel-plated frame. The new bike's fairing, which was designed by British stylist John Mockett, features additional instrumentation over the standard Hesketh, a remote headlight adjuster, sculpted air-vents to direct air at both the rider and passenger and built-in mounting for an optional rider/passenger intercom. With the introduction of the Vampire, Hesketh has doubled production.

FEDERAL CASES

• Senate Bill 158 passed the California legislature and has been signed into law. SB158, originally introduced by Senator Alan Robbins (Dem.), postpones until July 1, 1984 imple-

Continued

Some thoughts on motorcycle lubrication from Robert H. Wehman, president and chief engineer of Spectro Oils of America and Intercontinental Lubricants Corp.

YOUR CHOICE
GS4 - 20w 50SF
.....and now
GS4 - 10w 40SF.

In response to an overwhelming demand we have introduced Golden Spectro 4 in 10w 40 weight in addition to the very popular Golden Spectro 4 20w 50 weight.

If your riding is average year 'round touring, the new Golden Spectro 4 10w 40SF will offer a great deal in overall performance, improved shifting, a quieter engine, much smoother clutch operation and extended engine life.

If you are looking for high performance characteristics when riding interstates, mountain climbing, trailering or road racing, we recommend our Golden Spectro 4 20w 50SF for superior performance under all severe riding conditions.

Can't find it?
Send $15.00 and name of your nearest dealer. We will ship 4 quarts prepaid.

SPECTRO **SPECTRO OILS OF AMERICA**

P.O. BOX 208, BROOKFIELD, CT. 06804 (203) 775-1291

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1944 U.S. 68 North, Xenia, Ohio 45385

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- We Sell Every Name Brand Cycle Accessory Now Available
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We gladly ship C.O.D.
Free Shipping in the 48 States To Your Door.

HOURS: Mon., Tues., Thurs. 9-6; Fri., Sat. 9-5 Eastern Time Zone, Closed Wed. & Sunday

FREE FREIGHT

Touring Accessory Special of the Month

Johar Signature Grips.....reg. $24.95.....our price $17.95

Authorized Vetter Dealer

WE HAVE THE BEST VETTER PRICES CALL TOLL FREE and SEE!!

WINDJAMMER V Price On Request*
Available in Blk Wht Silver Night Stalker or Color Matched Includes shield and mounts

LOWERS P.O.R.*

WINDSTAR P.O.R.*
Available in Blk Wht Silver or Color Matched Price includes windshield & all mounts Other options available

QUICKSILVER P.O.R.*
Complete with windshield and all mounts. Options available. White, Silver, or Night Stalker Black.

ROOSTER P.O.R.*

SADDLEBAGS P.O.R.*
These detachable bags are available in Black White Silver Night Stalker or Color Matched and include all necessary mounting hardware and luggage rack

TAILTRUNK P.O.R.*
Works with Vetter or other racks & is available in Blk Wht Silver Night Stalker or Color Matched All hardware included

ULTRA SOUND

VETTER, HONDA, or STAR	P.O.R.*
ROOSTER ULTRA SOUND	P.O.R.*
SILVER SOUND w/radio	P.O.R.*
WING TIPS	P.O.R.*
RADIO COVER	P.O.R.*
VETTERLITE HELMET	P.O.R.*
GHOST, Rd.,or Sq.	P.O.R.*
TATTOOS, Soft Bag, Blk	P.O.R.*
QUARTZ H/L	$22.95
100/55 Bulb	$16.95
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TIME MACHINES:

CAMA Antique Rally '83

A moto time-warp in Hanford.

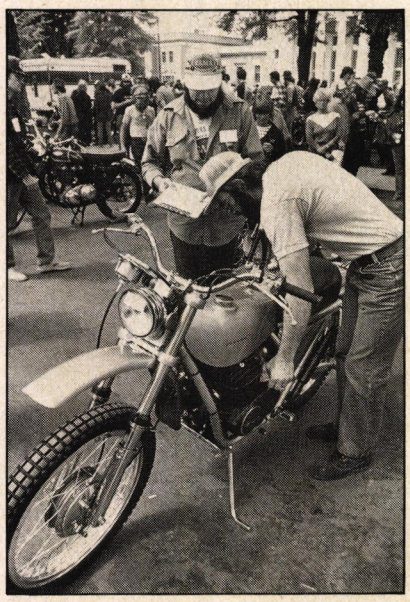
• Hanford is no place for misty-eyed reminiscence. The people who assemble in this central-California farming town for the Classic and Antique Motorcycle Association's annual meet know too much to be awe-struck by names like Ace, Brough, Vincent or Henderson. It's not that they don't appreciate the machinery—they do. But it's an appreciation based on the dull gleam of hand-polished reality, not the glistening plastic-chrome of myth.

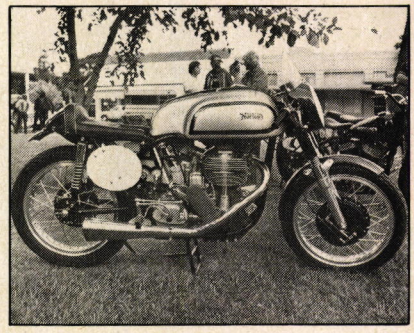
This flinty-eyed appreciation is typical of Frank Conley, founder and guiding light of CAMA. Under Conley's tutelage, the meet has grown considerably since the first in 1968. That first CAMA Rally, held in nearby Visalia, drew just 28 machines along with a small cadre of vintage-bike enthusiasts. For the '83 event, Conley found himself presiding over 600 vintage bikes and 8000 spectators.

Part of the phenomenal growth is the result of CAMA's flexibility, which allows nearly anyone with a motorcycle to enter. CAMA currently has three categories: Antique, Classic and Modern Classic. "We try to have a class for everyone," Conley says.

The Antique class is for machines more than 50 years old. And the older they are, the better; judges award one additional point for each year of a bike's age. The Classic class accepts bikes with rare or unusual qualities. "Of course, a bike can be both an Antique and a Classic. Last year a Rudge was runner-up in both classes," he says. The third major category in CAMA's judging classes is Modern Classic. Originally, this class was intended for rare, limited production machines, like the Yankee or the Munch Mammoth. But people started showing up with Norton Commandos or middle-age BMWs, hoping to enter them as Classics and Conley relented. "There are very few true 'classics.' A lot of bikes now thought of as classics weren't worth a damn when they were new. But you can't tell people that," he says. So the Modern Classic class takes in just about anything that might show up at the Rally.

Which is not surprising, because the CAMA Rally is very much an extension of Frank Conley's attitudes about motorcycling in general. For instance, he doesn't recognize *any* Harley-Davidson as a Classic. "They're wonderful motorcycles," he explains, "but how can anything they made 25,000 of be rare?" And recently there's been considerable grumbling among some entrants about the Rally's overabundance of British machinery. But ruffled feathers don't bother Conley. The Rally is his baby and, as far as he's concerned, the judging takes a back seat to the event itself. "We want people to come out and have a good time," he says. "We like to keep it low-key. The kind of guy who gets upset because he doesn't win 'Best In Show' should just stay home."





And so the class judging, which takes place right on the street in front of the courthouse, is casual, indeed. As an example, this year one first-time entrant, showing his 500cc Yankee two-stroke, was worried that officials would deduct points because his bike didn't have a set of original tank decals. He needn't have fretted; the judge just looked up from his scoresheet and commented, "Nice paint." Conley does insist that all bikes entered actually run, though. Consequently, part of the competition includes starting and riding each machine, with extra points given if the bike starts in three kicks or less.

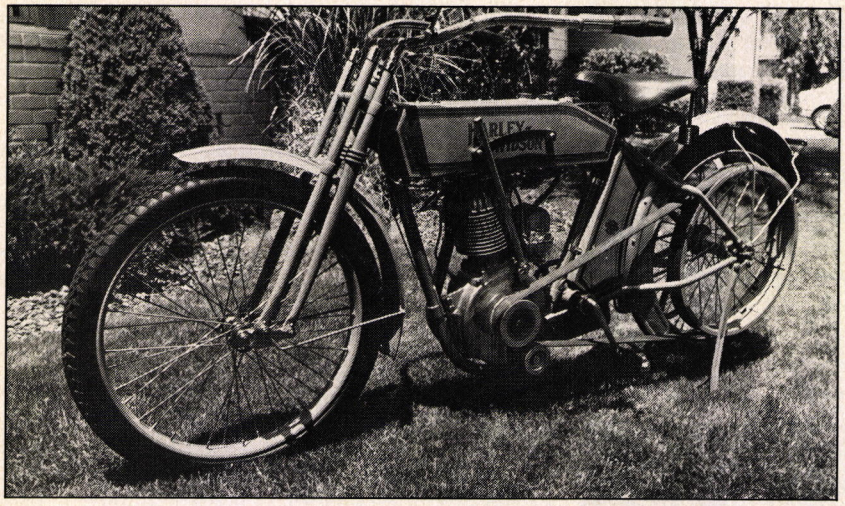
With the Rally's continued success, there's no arguing against Frank Conley's low-key attitude. "The main thing is just getting your bike out and presenting it. This event is about kicking tires and swapping lies, and maybe meeting someone who used to ride a bike just like yours," he says. And no antique rally would be complete without a swap-meet; Hanford's town square is lined with vendors, their tables and boxes filled to overflowing with the bits and pieces and sought-after treasures needed to put together a vintage machine. The reason for CAMA is good fellowship, Conley says. "Motorcycling the way it used to be, with motorcycles the way *they* used to be," he says.

And after the judging concludes and the trophies have been handed out, for a while Hanford is filled with even the sound of motorcycling as it used to be. Before they leave, most of the entrants fire-up their bikes for the unofficial "Best Tone" contest. Some of the rarest and sweetest notes ever produced by internal combustion echo through the marble columns of the courthouse. It's an appropriate end to the Rally, because no amount of embellishment could improve on the sounds of a Matchless single or Norton twin. The reality in this case is far better than the myth.

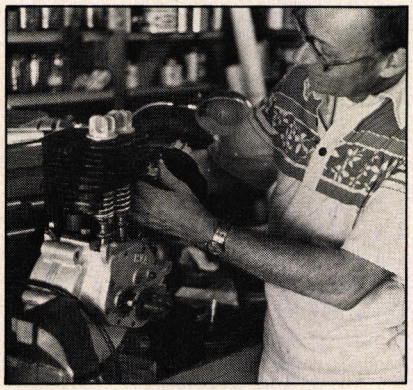
—Jerry Smith

The Restoration Game:

For some, it's the only one in town.



• Bob Godard's passion is restoring classic and antique motorcycles, and one of the things that fuels that passion is a love of simplicity. "I pity the poor guy 50 years from now who tries to restore a GS1100. Bikes today aren't built to be rebuilt, they're built to be replaced," he said. This observation is based on Godard's intimate familiarity with the insides of a number of motorcycles, ranging from 1912 Harley-Davidsons to the turbocharged two-wheelers of the present.



While the old machines in Godard's garage might be simple, the task of restoring them certainly isn't. Just finding an interesting bike to rebuild is getting harder and harder as time goes by. "I chased down most of these by word of mouth," he said. With a sweep of his hand he indicated several Harleys from the 'teens and Twenties, a 1938 BSA, a 1950 Velocette and a Triumph Tiger Cub. "It's seldom you get a good deal from another restorer. What you might get is either overpriced or absolute junk," he said.

It takes time to track down the right bike, and patience is a valuable ally. "It takes six months to a year, on the average, to restore a bike," Godard said. Locating missing or broken parts can require the cunning and tenacity of Sherlock Holmes, and sometimes even that fails. So how does Godard replace the unreplaceable? "Oh, I'll just make it. Even if it comes down to making a mold and casting the new part from scratch," he said. While it's impossible to measure a part that isn't there, Godard gets pretty close by taking dimensions from parts-catalog photos and scaling them up to size. For reference, he maintains a file of original factory literature—sales brochures, advertisements, spec sheets and the like—and he subscribes to nearly every classic bike magazine published. Besides shopwork, it can take plenty of paperwork to put a rare bike back on the road.

And that's the best part of the job—getting the machine back on the road. There are no mantlepiece-motorcycles for Godard; if he can't make it run, it's not worth his time to restore it. In fact, making a machine operational is one of the first priorities he has with a new acquisition. "If I get a complete bike, I'll see if I can ride it first. I'll run it for a while and work the bugs out, and then I'll tear it down to the last nut and bolt and rebuild it right."

But Bob Godard isn't a fanatic about originality, and that might set him apart from the purists, some of whom stop just short of importing British air to put in their bikes' tires. But, according to Godard, the real trick with motorcycle restoration is not so much in knowing where to start as it is in knowing when to stop. A sense of proportion tempers Godard's enthusiasm. His '38 BSA, for example, wears a non-original, yet classically simple, carburetor—a Mikuni.

—Jerry Smith

Continued

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mentation of the new—and much stricter—hydrocarbon-emission standard recommended by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The proposed CARB emission standard would have been five times tougher than that set at the national level by the Environmental Protection Agency. To meet CARB's standard, catalytic convertors would have had to be mounted on affected motorcycles (280cc and larger) sold in California. But now, as Robbins says, "This legislation will allow us to step back and take another look at motorcycle air pollution. The legislature has established that catalytic convertors are not the answer, because we are not convinced that catalytic devices can be safely mounted on motorcycles." However, Robbins admits his legislation is not the final solution to the catalytic-convertor controversy, but notes the law, ". . . gives us a year's worth of breathing room to work with CARB and motorcycle designers to develop low-pollution motorcycles." The Robbins bill was introduced first in January 1983, and the original version postponed CARB's emission standard for five years. After several amendments, the bill passed the Senate and Assembly and was signed into law by California's governor, George Deukmejian, on June 16.

• In three other states, motorcyclists are in line for possible insurance breaks. In Texas, HB1526 proposes insurance discounts for riders who equip their bikes with anti-theft devices, while Georgia's H1176 would grant insurance discounts to riders who have completed an approved safe-riding course. And West Virginia's H1493 would allow a 10 percent reduction in insurance rates to riders completing a state-approved motorcycle accident-prevention course.

• But while riders in Texas, Georgia and West Virginia could get some monetary relief, motorcyclists in Massachusetts might take on a new, more colorful look. S1346, now before that state's Senate Public Safety Committee, would require motorcyclists to wear reflective orange jackets or harnesses at night. But don't get the feeling that motorcyclists are being singled out there; the proposed legislation also would require bicyclists and *pedestrians* to wear the reflective orange gear.

• The debate continues over Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 108. In 1981, Harley-Davidson petitioned the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to amend the statute to allow headlight modulators on motorcycles. Countering the H-D petition, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety claimed the devices would cause an increase in highway accidents, because the pulsing lights could induce epileptic seizures or the nausea, dizziness and unconsciousness that accompany a condition known as photic driving, also brought on by pulsing lights. The Epilepsy Foundation of America, however, believes the Institute's concern is misdirected. According to the Foundation, a pulsing of 10 cycles per second or less is considered safe. Headlight modulators operate in a range of 2-4 cycles per second and, as Dr. Chester Haworth, a North Carolina neurologist, states, ". . . pulsing headlights could in no way precipitate clinical seizures." But recent cutbacks in the NHTSA staff have stalled any further action on the Harley petition.

• Meanwhile, Oregon, Illinois, Maine, South Carolina and Virginia all are currently considering legislation to approve the use of headlight modulators on motorcycles. These states aren't waiting for a change in the federal standard, and hope to enact separate legislation aimed at making motorcyclists more visible in traffic.

HARD CASH

• Suzuki is making its bikes hard to overlook—at least as far as money is concerned. Three more models from that company now have new, lower suggested retail prices. The biggest price drop comes on the GS750TZ, which now sells for $2299; that's $550 less than its previous sticker price. The new GS550ED, the middleweight sport machine we tested in June, also sells for $2299 now, down $500 from its old retail price. And Suzuki isn't neglecting the midsize custom-bike market; the GS550LD cruiserbike now carries a pricetag of $2199. The new price on that machine reflects a $400 drop.

Suzuki's 550L has a new pricetag

It's a bargin of a midsize cruiser.

• Manufacturers might be having a hard time moving two-wheeled inventory out the door, but that isn't the case with three-wheelers. All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) now account for 24.7 percent of the total unit sales, industry-wide. During 1982, more than 300,000 ATVs were imported into this country—and most of them didn't stay in warehouses very long.

• As a sign of just how important the ATV business has become, U.S. distributors and manufacturers of those fat-tired off-roaders recently formed a separate trade association. The founding members of the new Specialty Vehicle Institute of America are, not surprisingly, Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha.

• The Maico factory in West Germany has been forced into bankruptcy, according to overseas sources. But Maico's U.S. spokesman, Uli Von Scheunemann, says three separate investment groups, two of them American, currently are negotiating to buy the company. According to Von Scheunemann, the restructured Maico organization would concentrate on the U.S. market, where it believes 5000 units can be sold per year.

RUMORS

• Sources inside Yamaha tell us to look for some changes from that company. They say that instead of stretching its existing model lineup and keeping the same basic designs in the showrooms for multi-year runs, Yamaha now plans to annually revamp its line to include major updates, upgrades and radical revisions.

• And if those tuning-fork-company insiders speak the truth, that's exactly what might happen with the '84 Yamaha XJ650 Turbo. The word we get is that the silver Turbo will look very much like it has for the past two years—but it won't run the same. In the Turbo's case, reportedly, Yamaha updates, upgrades and revisions translate into horsepower. So for '84 you might see a force-fed Yamaha that, for a change, performs like one. Our sources wouldn't get specific about power numbers for this third-generation Turbo, but they did say the increase is impressive.

• Something else you might look forward to on '84-model Yamahas are wings. The company is experimenting with aerodynamic devices we're told, and the results could show up on fairings, fenders and even engine cases. If the Yamaha interest in aerodynamically generated downforce is genuine, would anyone care to speculate about the appearance of the '84 Venture's luggage?

• California's catalytic-convertor law might have been put off for the time being, but we're told it already has had an effect on the manufacturers. And that effect wasn't what you might have expected; our insiders report that factory engineers, aware of the emission-cleanup capabilities of convertors, have been taking a long, hard look at two-strokes for the streets. That's two-strokes for *our* streets, the highways of America. Interested?

• Talk concerning the '84 Hondas is starting to filter out, and one bit we keep hearing centers on the Gold Wing. The '84 GL, so goes the story, will be all new, "top to bottom," as our man-in-the-know put it. He also said not to be surprised by a 16-inch wheel on the front of the '84 tourer and a *huge* 15-inch hoop at the rear.

• We told you about it in last month's Rumors, and the VF400F test makes mention of it in this month's issue. What we're talking about, of course, is the possibility of seeing a VF550F in Honda's '84 lineup. And, if sources are correct, that bike is more than just a possibility; they say it's on its way.

• Those same Honda sources hinted a little more about a VF1100F for '84. This mega-horsepower sportbike, they say, might borrow more than just the engine from the V65 Magna. The early word we get is that this Honda sport machine could show up with shaft drive.

• And from what we hear, the latest evolution of H-D's 80-cubic-inch Big Twin is about ready to hit the streets. We've been told to look for the standard 45 degree twin to have, as one insider describes it, a radically different cylin-

der-head design.

• The recent ITC decision and the resultant tariff increase has really started the wheels turning at Honda and Kawasaki, the two Japanese companies with U.S.-based assembly plants. Don't be surprised to see these two manufacturers *significantly* step-up production at American facilities and start building a lot more 750cc and larger bikes here, circumventing the new tariff on motorcycles of more than 700cc. And don't be surprised if one of the new models Kawasaki starts putting together at its Lincoln, Nebraska plant is the GPz750 Turbo. Remember, Kawasaki indicated it wanted to sell that bike at a lower price than any other turbo. Building it here—and bypassing the added tariff—certainly would be one way to accomplish that goal.

• But Target Design just wants to build motorcycles, period. At least that's the word from England. Our man Over There reports that Target, the company responsible for design work on the original Suzuki Katana, now wants to assemble complete motorcycles on its own. Details are sketchy, but so far it appears Target Design will have 125cc, 250cc, 350cc and 500cc machines in its lineup. Reportedly, all the bikes will be Rotax-powered. And they'll all have monocoque construction, as well. More on this as it develops.

• And finally, this is something we've been hearing from more than just one of our inside sources. All our contacts report that, with the catalytic-convertor problem put off for at least a year, manufacturers are making one last run at all-out performance. And you thought *high*-10-second quarter-mile times were quick.

AFTER THE FACT

• In our Riding Impression of the Equalean sidecar (April 1983), we reported that the sidecar's sliding-ball-and-track linkage inhibited right-side lean angles. Wally and Ghraydon Wallick, founders of Equalean Inc., recognized this and now equip their sidecars with a track that can pivot a limited amount, front-to-rear. This new track reduces the binding that limited right-hand lean angles, and can be retrofitted to existing Equalean sidecars. The Wallicks also have improved the sidecar's ride quality by installing a Boge Mulholland air-spring shock absorber in place of the S&W air-only shock as used on our testrig. This, too, can be retrofitted. For more information, contact Equalean Inc., Dept CG., 711 W. 17th St., E-6, Costa Mesa, California 92627; (714) 645-9349.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• It's ironic, but while Harley-Davidson is in the midst of a life-or-death struggle with the Japanese, in Japan itself Harleys are sought-after and highly prized possessions. The heavyweight American machines have be-

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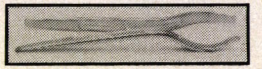

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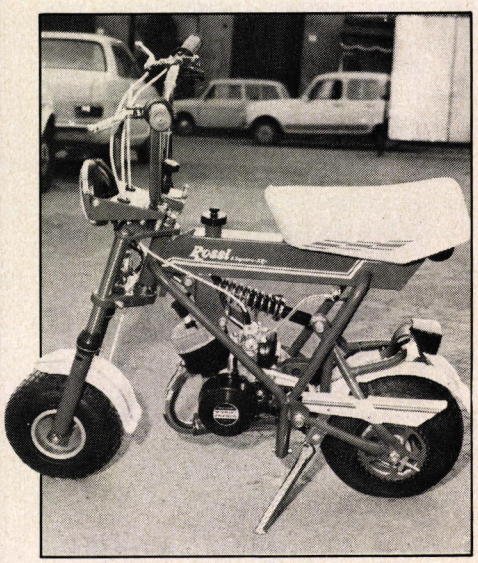
come status symbols in that country, representing wealth and independence. Price, undoubtedly, plays a big part in the H-D's exclusivity; the least expensive Harley sells for about $8800 in Japan. But few of the more than 3000 Japanese who ride Harley-Davidsons choose a bottom-of-the-line model. The real status comes with owning a full-dress machine—a bike that rolls out the showroom door there for a cool $21,000.

• How would you like to buy a brand new/old Triumph 350cc or 500cc twin, including a T100R Daytona 500 that hasn't yet turned a wheel? Well, if the current plans of a London bike dealership, MCS, work out, you might get that chance. Ted Bloomfield, owner of the British company, says he's unearthed a huge stock of spare parts for the old bikes, enough to build 40-50 complete motorcycles. "Every nut and bolt on these bikes will be new," Bloomfield says. And, because he was able to get the parts at reasonable prices, the reconstructed Triumphs will sell for about $1800. The line forms to the right—it's the *long* one.

• At this year's Isle of Man TT races, speeds were higher than ever before. In fact, the race speeds simply were too much for some sidecar-class passengers to deal with; a number of them quit the race and took the next boat off the island. Ashley Wooler, passenger for four-time sidecar winner Trevor Ireson, put in his walking papers after just two laps of practice. The fact that radar guns had the pair at almost 135 mph—before they spun the outfit and jumped a curb—might have had something to do with Wooler's decision.

• Okay, if you're going to have a pitbike, you might as well have one with some class, right? Your racebike has a telescopic fork and, most probably, a single-shock rear suspension system, so why not have a pit-cruiser with the same goodies? Here it is, and the 50cc, Italian-made Rossi even goes one better; it mounts a Dell'Orto carburetor, too. Now, how's *that* for style? ●



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ROAD TEST:

HONDA VF400F

Can greatness be downsized without being diminished?

BY CHARLES EVERITT

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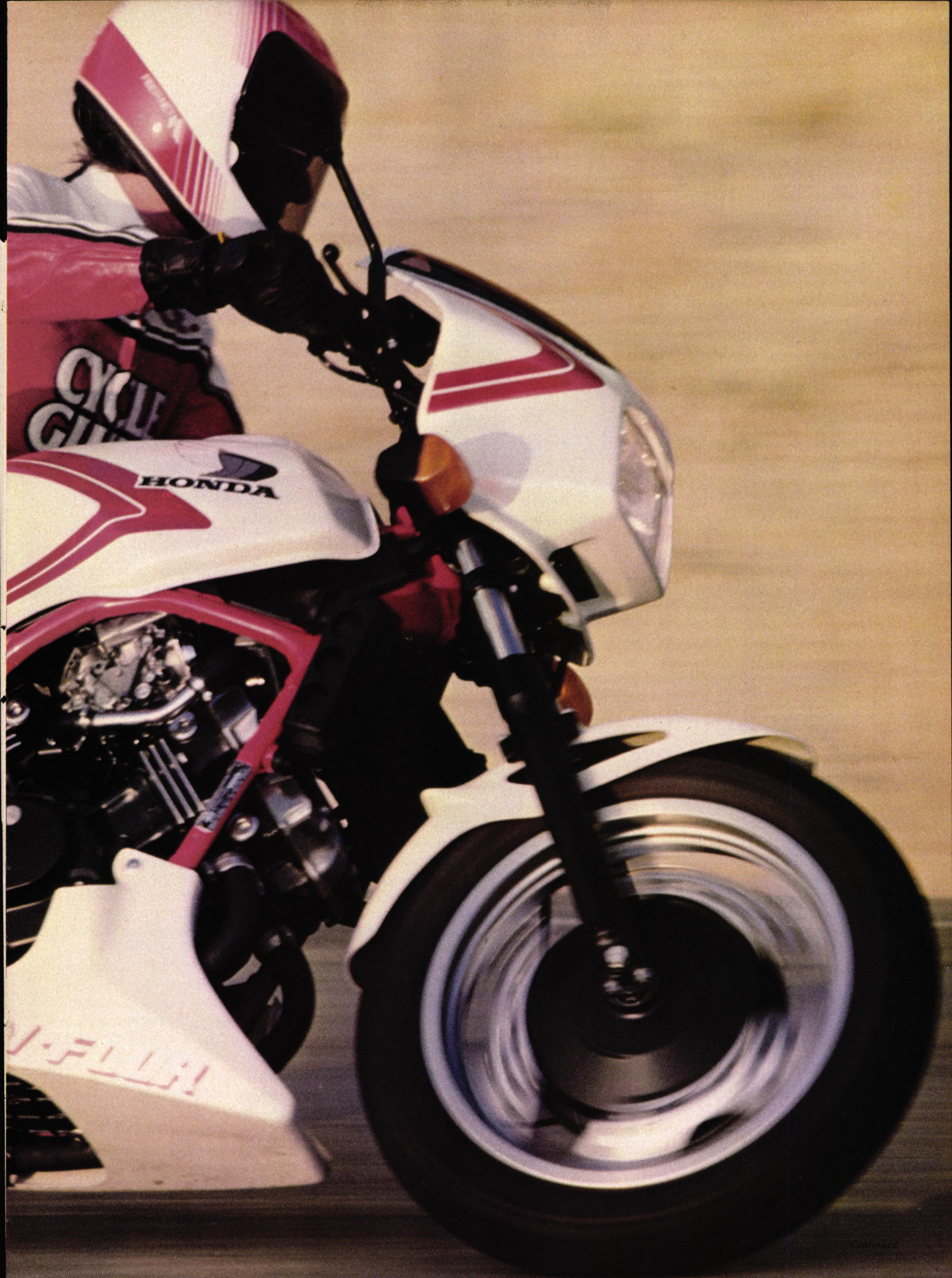

HONDA

Greatness is a rare commodity, but these days you can find it in motorcycling's 750cc class in the form of Honda's VF750F Interceptor. No other motorcycle—in any class—offers the Interceptor's range of abilities, without sacrificing versatility in the bargain. It's that very quality that made us choose the VF750F as our Bike of the Year for 1983 (August issue).

But for all the hoopla surrounding the Interceptor, Honda hasn't forgotten the sporting-middleweight rider. For proof, just look to the VF400F, a virtual half-size clone of the VF750F. Honda's engineers did an extraordinary job of downsizing the Interceptor into 400-class form—from the liquid-cooled, 90 degree vee-four engine, to the chin fairing and the quick-fill-replica fuel petcock—yet the bike's depth of ability wasn't compromised one bit. The VF400F accelerates hard enough to yank the headlights out of almost anything else currently available in the 400 class, and handles with a precision that underscores its Interceptor lineage. And it still can do double-duty as day-to-day transportation.

There's a fundamental catch to this mini-Interceptor's greatness, though: Honda doesn't offer it for sale in the United States. No, the VF400F is for European and Japanese markets only, for the same reasons the CBX400F, the VF's transverse four-cylinder predecessor, never made it to this country: There simply isn't the demand for high-performance "little" bikes in America that there is in Europe and Japan. And so it's economically unfeasible for Honda to provide the American market with a 400cc vee-four. But although we couldn't get a VF400F from Honda, we weren't about to let that stop us from sampling one, even if we had to go through other channels to do so (see "Smuggler's Handbook," page 31).

You might not agree with Honda's reasoning behind keeping the VF off our shores, but you'll find it nearly impossible to fault the firm's execution in building this tiny Superbike; all it takes to convice you is a single trip through a series of backroad corners. To say the VF400 steers quickly is a gross understatement, although with the bike's short wheelbase, steep (26.5 degrees) steering head angle, 91mm of trail and 16-inch front wheel, you could hardly expect it to steer otherwise. Consequently, the VF seems to respond to your very thoughts, even anticipating them at times. Which is all well and good, provided that where you think you want to go is where you *really* want to go; the VF reacts quickly and doesn't care much for any indecision from its rider.

VF400F's light, responsive steering makes other middleweight flyers feel sluggish

It can carve through city traffic as easily as it can strafe apexes, too.

Not that there's any hocus-pocus to the VF400's sensitivity. It's a small, light (402 pounds) motorcycle that doesn't require any manhandling. Subtle control-inputs are the key. The same goes for hanging-off, too, because while that technique works nicely on the VF, the bike will overreact to sloppy gymnastics. The rider's movements must be fluid and precise to be productive.

Once you learn not to overpower the bike, the VF displays its Interceptor heritage. You can take huge liberties with this motorcycle, picking whatever line you please through a corner, even changing lines at a moment's whim. The VF400 has a natural tendency to head for the inside of a corner, allowing for a tight line. Closing the throttle or applying the brakes while turning makes the bike lift up only slightly, widening its arc through the corner. The bike always responds with complete predictability, something that builds rider confidence on twisty backroads, because the pilot knows he can compensate quickly and accurately for almost any circumstance.

In fact, the VF400's handling is almost completely vice-free. Despite the quick steering, nothing seems to perturb the bike once it's set into a given lean angle. Bumpy turns don't faze it; hitting bumps while leaned over will upset the front end for an instant, but the bike never wavers off-line. That same Interceptor-like stability shows up in fast sweepers, too, where all the rider has to do is hold on and gas it. The only time we could make the VF400 misbehave was in trying to change directions on top of a bumpy rise. There, in attempting to turn while the suspension was momentarily unloaded, the Honda's rear end felt vague and wallowed briefly before regaining its composure. Nevertheless, the VF handled that awkward situation with surprising grace.

One thing that broadens the VF400F's handling capabilities is its nearly limitless cornering clearance. The exhaust pipes, footpegs, sidestand and centerstand are so well tucked-in that the VF can be cranked over to preposterous lean angles, even to where the sticky Bridgestone Mag Mopus tires begin to chatter, and *still* nothing touches down.

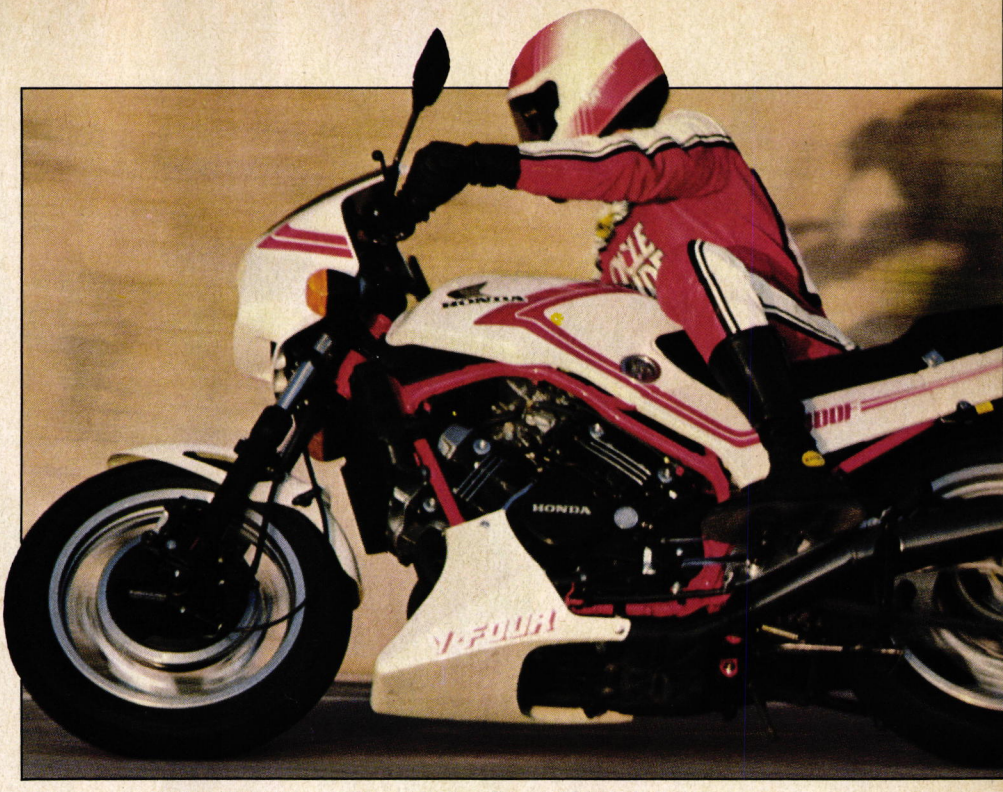
It's the VF400's Interceptor-replica chassis, though, that provides the foundation for superior handling. The frame itself runs along Interceptor lines, with a steering neck stoutly locked into place by double downtubes and two top tubes that take a fairly straight path down to the swingarm pivot. It's the same formula that works so well with the VF750F, and it serves the VF400 just as admirably. The 400 uses round-section tubing, however, instead of the Interceptor's rectangular tubing. According to Honda spokesmen, 400cc motorcycles don't stress the chassis sufficiently to make using cornered tubing worth the extra cost.

And although the 750 and 400 both use a bolt-in member for the left downtube to facilitate engine removal, the VF400F's left downtube also serves as a coolant passage between the single radiator (versus the Interceptor's dual radiators) and the water pump, whereas the VF750F's downtube is dry.

Besides the use of round tubing for the frame, there's further concern for cost evident in the VF400F's suspension components. In the rear, for instance, the smaller Honda's Pro-Link setup works a single, air-assisted Showa shock with no provision for rebound-damping adjustment. Honda cut no corners with the 400's swingarm, though; it's a cast-aluminum piece similar to the VF750F's. But the 400's front fork lacks the Interceptor's sophisticated rebound-damping adjuster; and while there is provision for air-adjustment, the 35mm fork tubes aren't interconnected.

Despite its limited suspension adjustability, the VF400 works quite well with a 150-pound-or-lighter rider aboard. At full-soft air pressures (0 psi in the fork and 14 psi in the shock), the ride is exceptional for such a little motorcycle, and only certain types of small, abrupt pavement-irregularities make the ride slightly harsh. Otherwise, the VF insulates the rider from bumps without robbing him of road-feel. Higher speeds and heavier (160 pounds or more) riders require boosting air pressures up to maximum (6 psi front; 43 psi rear), though, and even then a heavy pilot can bottom the rear shock when he's really hustling.

If Honda shorted the VF400F in terms of the Interceptor's suspension niceties, few such obvious concessions were made in building the 399cc, liquid-cooled vee-four motor. Indeed, the 750cc and 400cc vee-four engines were designed at the same time, and their similarities show throughout. In particular, the VF750F and VF400F use second-generation 90-degree vee-fours that, unlike Honda's Sabre and Magna vee-fours, have their cylinders positioned almost 45 degrees from vertical; the Sabre/Magna front cylinders are almost horizontal and the rear ones nearly vertical. The layout of components in the VF750F and VF400F engines is virtually the same, with a few minor differences. The 400 employs a roller chain to drive its four cams, whereas the Interceptor uses a Hy-Vo-type silent chain; and the smaller bike has a normal, hydraulically actuated clutch instead of the 750's one-way Sprague-type hydraulic unit, and a different gear-selector mechanism. The 400 also has a slightly higher compression ratio than the VF750F, measuring 11.0:1 compared to the bigger motor's 10.5:1 ratio.



Fast sweepers let the VF400 show off its stable handling and high-winding horsepower

But there's just one flaw: You can't buy it from your Honda dealer—yet.

Those few changes can't disguise the VF400 engine's Interceptor-like qualities; the feel of the two engines is nearly identical. Power builds smoothly and predictably, while the highly oversquare bore and stroke dimensions (55mm by 42mm) allow the 400 to rev to an incredible 12,500-rpm redline—2000 rpm higher than the Interceptor's—quickly, with no noticeable surges or peaks in the power delivery. The quality of vibration radiated by the 400 is the same as the Interceptor's, too, with no more than a slight, unobjectionable throb through the grips and pegs, even at peak revs.

What's more impressive about the smaller Honda, though, is its horsepower output. Honda claims 54 horses for the 400, which translates to 135 horsepower per liter, and that's simply stunning for a production streetbike. By comparison, the VF750F puts out a claimed 86 horsepower, or 115 horsepower per liter. But, amazingly, the 400 isn't the slightest bit peaky. Obviously, there's more power in the upper part of the rpm band, but the motor never feels like it's straining, and seems perfectly content to live at or near the astronomical redline. Fast riding in

Continued

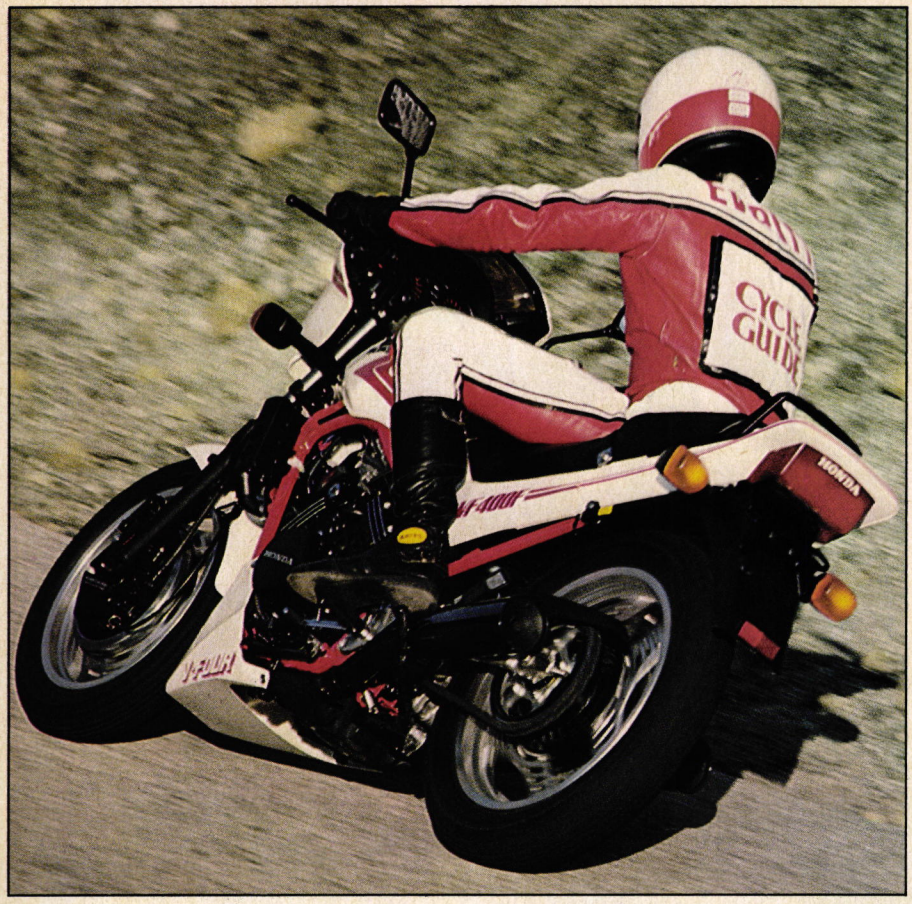
COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile,sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph,ft.
Honda VF400F—'83	13.588/96.35	112	402	127
Honda CBX400—'82	13.588/96.46	110	402	128
Suzuki GS450E—'83	14.236/93.16	106	384	131
Yamaha XS400 Seca—'82	14.589/89.28	110	382	140
Suzuki GS550E—'83	12.593/104.04	120	443	135
Kawasaki GPz550—'83	12.647/102.97	132	438	144

HONDA VF400F *Continued*

Honda could have made the VF400F a shallow Interceptor-lookalike, and most riders would have been happy. Instead, the engineers chose to satisfy more-demanding riders. They drew upon the VF750F's technology and built a 399cc liquid-cooled vee-four motor that pumps out 135 horsepower per liter, and mounted it in a frame that borrows heavily from GP roadracing designs. The result *is* a mini-Interceptor, downsized dimensionally, but not in greatness.

Continued



tight, slow corners does require a fair amount of tap-dancing on the shift lever to keep the engine spinning at more than 7000 rpm for good drives out of turns. The 400's transmission works well, most of the time, at least, only occasionally refusing to engage during a quick upshift.

Slowing down for those corners is another matter. The VF has enclosed, ventilated disc brakes front and rear, and while their stopping power is above average, so is the amount of lever pressure they require. And even during moderately fast sprints through the twisties, the front brake can get smoking-hot and fade until the lever comes back almost to the grip. Still, after a prolonged cooling period, the front brake always returns to normal and, hot or cold, provides excellent lever-feel. Aggressive riders will detect a trace of fork-flex during maximum-effort panic stops, despite the 400's small fork brace. Those same riders won't notice much front-end dive during hard braking, though, because the VF's mechanically actuated TRAC anti-dive system effectively diminishes such antics.

Apart from the easy-fade front brake, the only other criticism we have about the VF400F concerns its ergonomics. The VF is tiny, and only shorter riders will find it truly comfortable; 6-footers dwarf the bike. But if you fit the VF, the crouching, Euro-style seating position is nearly perfect for fast corner-work.

Riders who fit the VF400F will also be pleasantly surprised at its versatility, another trait that distinguishes the Interceptor. The generous low-end power lets the VF pull away from a stop without needing roadracer-like clutch-slipping, while the smooth, quick-revving engine combines with the nimble handling to make the VF as at home on city streets as it is on country backroads.

The finer points of the VF400F's performance might seem a bit abstract, though, because you still can't buy such a motorcycle from a Honda dealer in the U.S. But, as good as the VF-F is, not being able to find one in a showroom isn't a complete loss: Sources tell us a bike like the 400 might be sold in America in 1984—but in a *550cc* version.

That makes sense, in part because the International Trade Commission's tariff on 700cc-and-larger motorcycles built in Japan has shifted market-emphasis toward middleweights. On top of that, Honda hasn't offered a middleweight sporter in the U.S. since the original CB400F in 1977, and seems likely to rectify the situation. And if the 550 embodies the same qualities that make the VF400F great, *that* will be a motorcycle to lust after—just like the VF400F. •

Ride Review

• And you think you have problems. Sure, it'll be awhile before you'll be able to slice through corners on a VF400F, or something very much like it. But it's only a matter of time for you; Honda would be missing a bet if it didn't sell this bike—or a 550cc version—in the U.S. And Honda didn't get to its present Number One position in the industry by missing too many bets. So it's more or less a waiting game for you.

And that's what has me hopping mad. Even if there is such a bike in Honda's '84 lineup, it won't do me one bit of good. See, I'll never know, I mean *really* know, the sensation of throwing a bike with such lightning-quick responses into a set of curves. Because, at 6 feet 3 inches tall and 190 pounds, I'll never fit this bike. And bigger versions just wouldn't be the same. —*Joe Kress*

• Like Kress, I, too, am much too large to fit the VF400F, but that doesn't dampen my enthusiasm for the bike one bit. I'm no masochist, but I think that a little discomfort is a small price to pay for the unparalleled excitement the VF can deliver. How else could I experience a bike that steers as though controlled by brainwaves and can change direction so quickly that even its *shadow* has trouble keeping up? Then there's that unbelievable, 12,500-rpm redline, the kind of rpm ceiling most racebikes can't even muster. And those that can won't merrily chug around town all day or protect their owners with a 12-month, unlimited mileage warranty like the VF400F does.

That's why I'd willingly shoehorn my frame (size 42 Long) onto the VF400F (size 38 Regular) any day. And if I still didn't fit, I'd cut off my legs.

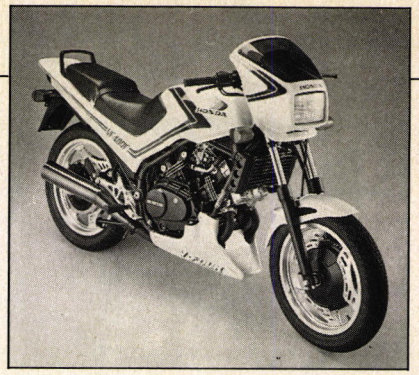
—*Paul Dean*

• If you're like most American riders, you're probably somewhat skeptical of the praise we've just heaped on the VF400F. After all, how could a 400, a "little" bike, be capable of world-class sport performance? And if your only exposure to the 400 class has been the bleak offerings that motorcycle manufacturers seem to think American riders want, that cynicism is understandable.

But *this* 400 is different. All it takes is one ride to convince you that the VF is every bit the purebred sportbike, the mini-Interceptor, we've called it. Of course, taking that ride, right now at least, is something of a problem, because this little speedster is a rare commodity. So you might have to wait for proof. But with all the winks, smiles and knowing glances at Honda these days, we believe you won't have to wait for long.

—*Larry Works*

The Smuggler's Handbook



• Looking at photos of a VF400F hammering through a set of esses, or reading about how the bike effortlessly arcs through a sweeper, is all well and good, but it can't compare with actually *riding* one.

But putting your hands on a VF400—or any of a long list of non-U.S.-approved motorcycles—poses significant problems. In the eyes of the Federal Government these banned bikes are guilty of transgressions ranging from street-use of a two-stroke engine, all the way to shamelessly sporting an on-off headlight switch.

Yet, where there's a will there's a way. If you'd rather pick and choose from the full list of the world's great motorcycles than to make your choice from an abbreviated selection the U.S. government approves, you can. It isn't easy or cheap, and it can involve considerable legwork, but it *is* possible. Above all, though, bringing in some Euro-spec wonderbike can be a confusing process. In fact, a call to the E.P.A. in Washington can yield a handsome assortment of opinions on the legality of importing this Continental Contraband.

When *we* called, we received a full range of "I don't know much about bikes; let me connect you with . . . " After a whirlwind phone-tour of the offices in D.C., we got a complete set of regulations about motorcycle importation. We were told that the first step in bringing in a non-approved motorcycle is to post a bond with U.S. Customs when the bike arrives equal to the resale value of the bike. Then, we were told, the bike must be shipped (owner's expense, of course) to the Southwest Research Institute in Houston, Texas, for emissions testing. If the bike doesn't pass muster, you're given 90 days to make it comply.

In extreme hardship cases, such as "Gross Emitters," (two-strokes, primarily, which often emit up to 20 times more exhaust particulates than a new car) it is possible to file a Petition of Mitigation. If your petition is approved, you forfeit 25 percent of your bond, the emissions standard is waived and you're home free. But when we asked what determines whether or not a petition is approved, we were told by a cheerful woman at the E.P.A. that if the petition is made in advance—before the bike arrives in Customs—it will "usually, most of the time" be approved. However, in the next breath she added "I would suggest not importing it if you can avoid it." In other words, "Usually" is *not* "always."

But the kicker came when we called the Southwest Research Institute. First, the bike-testing facility isn't in Houston but in San Antonio (a minor quibble). More to the point, the Institute hasn't maintained an operational motorcycle emissions testing program since 1978. Employees there seemed vastly amused that the E.P.A. didn't know this. And as far as anyone at SRI knew, there are no other facilities in the U.S. for bike emissions testing, either.

Now, all this is not to convince you to abandon your dream of importing some non-approved wonderbike, if you have such a dream at all. But to bring in that two-wheeled rarity, you have to be prepared to hack your way through jungles of contradictory red tape. The government agencies you'll have to deal with seem more concerned with writing regulations than with making them workable.

But there *are* alternatives to facing that regulatory onslaught by yourself. That very deluge of regulations has spawned a quietly expanding business in importing these bootleg bikes. And some of the participants in this new growth market offer a full-service approach to satisfying your motolust.

These purveyors of freedom of choice aren't on every street corner, and chances are good that you won't find billboards advertising their services. Most, like our contact for the VF400—call him X for the sake of reference—stop short of wearing trenchcoats and cutting midnight deals in back alleys. Still, they'd rather rely on the motorcycle grapevine than some more public advertising medium to hawk their wares. But they've got what you want. As X flatly states, "If you want a Eurobike, you don't have to resign yourself to not having it—they *are* available."

The key to X's operation is a low profile. He deals in shipments of as many as one-dozen orders at a time. Bikes from around the world are purchased, consolidated into one big consignment and air-freighted to the U.S. X says the worst mistake made in trying to import motorcycles is to ship them by sea, because often the goods will arrive rusty, damaged—and the shipping can take months. And dealing in consignments reduces shipping costs—shipped one at a time, a bike's cost could double from the freight charges alone. Further, lone bikes stand a greater chance of being singled out when they hit U.S. Customs.

The advantage of dealing with X, or with someone like him, is that he knows the ins and outs of the system. He can quickly clear a motorcycle through Customs—without bribes, he hastens to add—where inexperienced would-be importers might have to wait for months to free their cargo.

That experience of handling the ins and outs of motorcycle importation extends one vital step further. When non-U.S.-approved bikes are brought through Customs, they're labeled for racing use only. Legally, they can't be licensed. But our contact uses his knowledge of the system to identify what must be changed to bring the motorcycle into compliance, prepare the appropriate paperwork and then coach his customers on how to get the motorcycle *licensed*. He even succeeds when a bike won't meet E.P.A. standards (as we've already seen, there is no active testing program, so that problem is essentially moot). And using certain other experience-proven techniques that he tells his customer—but not us—the bike is registered. And if the customer is still apprehensive after all of the coaching, X will go down to the DMV and register the bike himself.

From that point on, X advises that as long as the customer keeps his registration up to date, and doesn't draw too much attention to himself with an overabundance of tickets, questions about the bike's legality need never arise. By the strict letter of the law, of course, the bike is licensed illegally—or at least, not in full compliance with the law. As our contact is the first to admit, if something should go askew, the customer has lost a sizeable gamble. Should something go wrong, either while the bike is in Customs, while it's being licensed or even after that, the customer could lose his investment, face a stiff fine and perhaps worst of all, be without the bike he wanted so badly in the first place. X admits that the buyer is taking a risk, though the unthinkable has never happened to one of *his* customers.

The cost for this service, incidently, runs around 30 percent of the bike's retail value—in X's case, at least. Considering the risks involved—however unlikely—some riders wouldn't consider doing business with X or his kind under any circumstances. But for others—those with money in their pockets and a keen understanding of what it means to have the only Euro-spec Interceptor, say, between here and Topeka, it's the only way to ride. *—Ted West*

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Honda VF400F — street

MANUFACTURER: Honda Motor Company Ltd., 27-8, 6-chome Jingu-mae, Shibuya-ku, 150 Japan

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: £1795 (approx. $2900)

ENGINE

Type . . . . . liquid-cooled four-stroke tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 55.0mm x 42.0mm
Displacement 399.1cc
Compression ratio 11.0:1
Engine redline . . . . . 12,500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 27mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . disposable paper element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . magneto CDI
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 260-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 12-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 2.533:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . . #520 O-ring chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.067:1 (46/15) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.733	21.230	3.51
II	1.850	14.371	5.18
III	1.478	11.481	6.49
IV	1.240	9.632	7.73
V	1.074	8.343	8.93
VI	0.931	7.232	10.30

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa air-spring, 35mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.6 in. (143mm)
Rear . . . . . single Showa air-spring shock/4.5 in. (114mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 9.0-in. (229mm) enclosed, ventilated disc
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 9.0-in. (229mm) enclosed, ventilated disc

TIRES

Front . . . . . 110/90-16 54H Bridgestone Mag Mopus L305 tubeless
Rear . . . . . 110/90-18 61H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G510 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

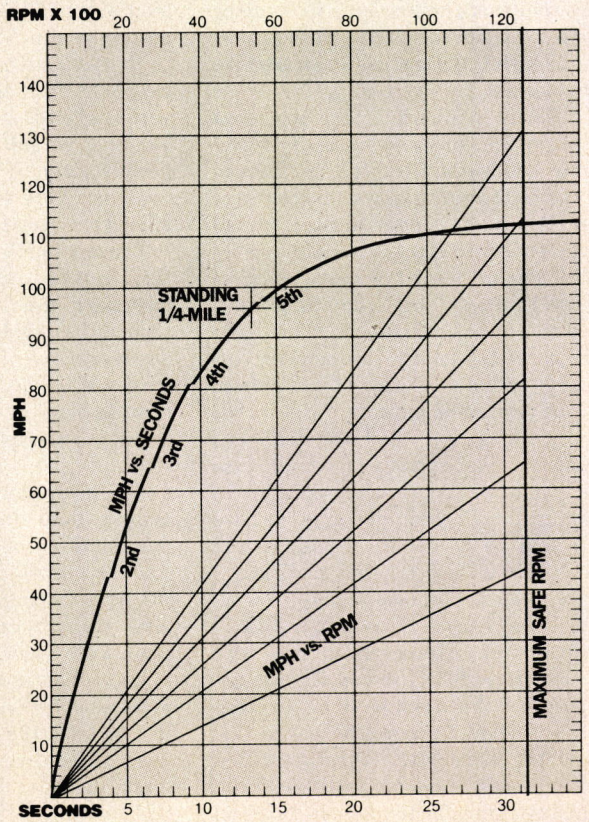
Weight . . . . . 402 lbs. (182.3kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 47.3% front, 52.7% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 825 lbs. (374kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 396 lbs. (180kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 55.4 to 56.6 in. (1407 to 1437mm)
Seat height . . . . . 31.8 in. (807mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 27.2 in. (690mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.8 in. (350mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 6.0 in. (151mm), at lower fairing
Steering head angle . . . . . 26.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 3.58 in. (91mm)
Front wheel trail . . . . . 3.58 in. (91mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.2 qt. (3.0/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 4.5 gal. (17.0/), including 1.1 gal. (4.0/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 34 to 51 mpg (14 to 22 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 42 mpg (18 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 153 to 230 miles (246 to 370km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . 37 to 56 miles (60 to 90km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 52 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 13.588 sec., 96.35 mph (155 km/h)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 112 mph (180 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 36 ft. (11.0m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 127 ft. (38.7m)

WARRANTY: 12 months unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: white with red; red with black and white



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

ATK-Leitner Fork Brace

Delivering on an old promise.

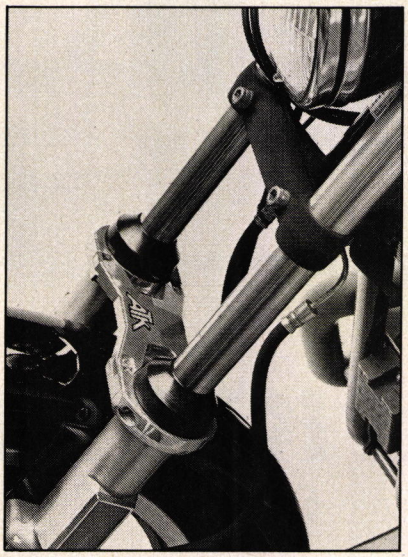
• As important as the precise connection between a motorcycle's handlebar and its front wheel is, often it's a need left unfulfilled. Between the bottom triple clamp and the axle the fork tubes are unsupported, and during hard cornering or braking the fork can flex, unsettling the bike's handling. A brace for the fork between the lower triple clamp and the axle is the obvious answer—so obvious, in fact, that fork braces have been around for years. But as simple as that solution sounds, sometimes a motorcycle will handle even worse with a brace than it did without one.

The basic concept of a fork brace isn't at fault; most often problems arise in the design and construction of a brace. Any non-adjustable fork brace, stamped-steel, welded-tubing-type or otherwise, is subject to discrepancies between the manufactured size of the brace and the dimensions of the fork it's mounted on. And any variations between brace and fork insures that a set of sliders will be held *out* of alignment; either being pushed apart or pulled together, causing fork-bind. And, in addition, the designs of many loop-type braces render them incapable of resisting the very fork-flex they're meant to control.

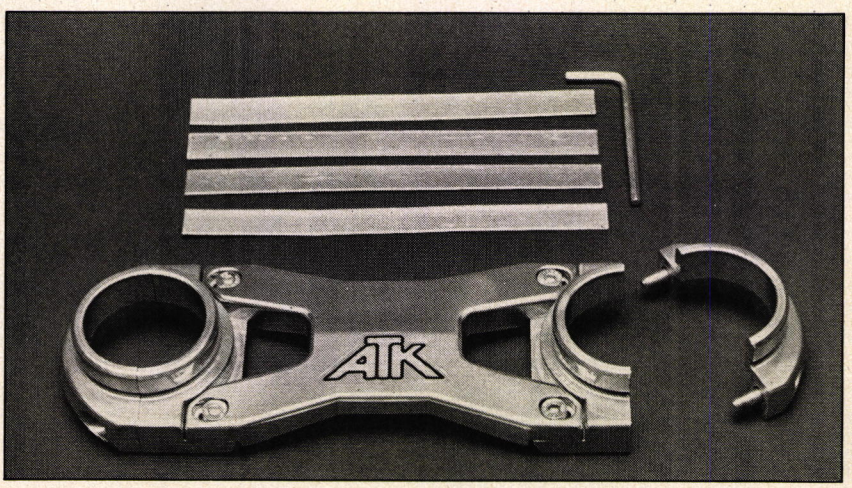
But several motorcycle manufacturers, aware of the benefits possible with a fork brace *and* the problems with existing designs, took another look at braces. A short, rigid casting was needed to act as a brace; something not, as had been the case with previous braces, prone to flexing. And the brace would have to be adjustable, as well, allowing a precision fit to alleviate fork-bind. The results can be seen in dealer's showrooms, with the newest sportbikes, and full-dress touring models for that matter, now using factory-standard fork braces. However, it isn't necessary to buy a new motorcycle to get one of these new-generation fork braces. The ATK-Leitner fork brace, introduced earlier this year, is an *aftermarket* variation of this new-style brace, using the same design concepts as the factory-standard models, including adjustability.

ATK's fork brace even looks like OEM equipment. The five, separate pieces of the brace are polished, cast-aluminum. In installing the unit, first the bolts securing the bridge-mounts to the fork sliders are tightened (the kit supplies the required Allen wrench). In some applications shimming material (also supplied) is used under the mount collars for a precise fit. Four Allen bolts, passing through elongated holes, fasten the bridge to the mounting lugs. That method of bridge-mounting is similar to the system Honda uses. And the result is the same, too; with the bridge free to slide back and forth into an unstressed position before it's tightened in place, the fork isn't spread apart by a brace that's too wide, or drawn together by one that's too narrow.

We tried the brace on two bikes we *knew* to have fork-flex problems: a Harley Sportster and a Yamaha SR500. In both cases, handling improvements after the braces were installed were immediately noticeable—and impressive. The Sportster's brace (a prototype for the part ATK soon will offer through H-D Parts and Accessories) slipped on as easily as the instructions claimed, taking no more than five minutes to install. And with the brace in place, the bike exhibited a more secure all-around feel, especially during hard cornering, while the Harley's tendency to follow highway rain grooves vanished. And in panic-stop situations, the bike felt more stable. The Sportster's fork compliance wasn't diminished at all; with the brace mounted, fork action was every bit as smooth as it had been without the brace. The brace's effects on the SR500 were much the same.



ATK-Leitner's unit retails for $69.95, not particularly expensive as fork braces go these days. For an additional $6, ATK offers an adaptor-block kit to raise or lower the bridge for easier mounting on some bikes. Six models of the brace (covering more than 60 different models of streetbikes) are available at all ATK dealers, or directly through ATK-Leitner Corp., Dept. CG, 2650 C Walnut Ave., Tustin, California 92680; (714) 731-5114. Riders outside California can contact ATK toll-free by calling (800) 854-4023. Think of it as a way to pump-up your bike's handling muscles—by taking away the flex. —*Joe Kress*



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 GILBERT LUNA

ATK's fork brace looks—and works—just like factory-standard equipment

And it's five-piece construction allows a precise fit every time.

MINITEST:

Kawasaki KX250

Kawasaki plays it cool in the red-hot 250 class.

• The winningest motocross machines have always traveled the road to victory by stepping over bikes like the Kawasaki KXs. After all, for every winner there has to be a runner-up, and more than a few of those second-best racers traditionally have been KX-green in color.

But this year Kawasaki stands a chance of breaking that tradition. The company has a newfound determination to free itself of the second-best syndrome, and for proof, you need look no further than the KX250. For the first time in years this quarter-liter motocrosser isn't out of step with the rest of the field. Instead, it has all the features to make it both attractive in the showroom *and* competitive on the racetrack. For starters, this year Kawasaki gave its 250 liquid-cooling. Just like all the other Japanese 250 MXers, the KX now has two radiators cooling a 50-50 mixture of distilled water and antifreeze. But unlike the others, the KX has a distinctive port-layout under its waterjackets. On each side of the exhaust port, which is lower than that of last year's KX, there is a small booster exhaust port. And inside the barrel casting lies a honeycomb of passages connecting the bridged intake port with both the crankcase and the transfer passages.

All that port trickery isn't just for show, either, because this KX250 makes as much power as anything in its class. That power is usable, too, and concentrated right in the center of the bike's rpm range. On top, the KX won't rev quite as high as a Yamaha YZ250. It does, however, keep pulling past the quitting point of a Honda CR250R, although the KX's low-end power doesn't fare as well when compared with that of the CR. In fact, the Kawasaki feels like it has taller gearing than the Honda, because at low speeds the CR easily pulls away. But the gearing on the two machines isn't the reason; the KX simply has less bottom-end torque and more flywheel inertia. That extra flywheel makes the KX reluctant to gain rpm when it's on the low side of its powerband, so fanning the clutch to bring the machine up on the pipe is the required technique. The clutch can withstand the abuse, but it's so grabby that a lot of practice is needed to consistently make good, fast starts.

It doesn't take much practice to adjust to the KX's handling, though. Kawasaki has long held the secret of building bikes that corner well and yet remain stable through the fast, rough stuff, and the '83 maintains the tradition. This year, the KX250 has a steeper steering-head angle, the engine sits lower in the frame and the wheelbase is shorter than on the '82 model. Those changes add up to a bike that turns even more crisply than did any past KXs. And, remarkably, the machine doesn't surrender any stability. Nevertheless, as highly as the KX's handling rates, it still doesn't match that of a Honda CR250R. The CR turns even better than the Kawasaki and is every bit as secure on the straights.

It's the same story with suspension. The Kawasaki's is good, but not as good as the Honda's. For one thing, the KX's front fork is too soft in stock form. For our test riders (in the 160- to 175-pound range), this problem was remedied with a 20cc increase in fork-oil level. The additional oil didn't pre-

vent the fork from sagging, but bottoming occurred less frequently and was not as harsh. Sharp-edged bumps never presented a problem for the front end, since the fork incorporates a blow-off valve that reduces compression damping during sudden impacts. The blow-off point can be adjusted by turning a screw in the bottom of each fork leg through a range of eight full turns; but the adjuster makes only a subtle difference in fork performance on sharp bumps, so we usually left the screws in the standard position (four turns out).

Those sharp bumps absorbed so effectively by the fork are more of a problem for the rear suspension. Sudden impacts can make the Uni-Trak kick, even though it will handle large, rolling whoops every bit as well as a Honda Pro-Link or a Suzuki Full Floater. A reduction in compression damping might make the Uni-Trak a better all-around performer, but that can't be accomplished without major damper surgery. The Kayaba shock does have externally adjustable rebound damping, which worked best for us on the third of its four positions when the bike was new. Later, though, we had to use the No. 4 position as the shock's oil began to thin; and after seven races it was necessary to change the oil.

It's also a good idea to change the fluid in the KX's front disc brake. The standard fluid expands as it heats up, causing the freeplay of the lever to change drastically during a race. Our test bike also had a small amount of air in its front-brake hydraulics, giving the lever a spongy feel. Replacing the fluid with DOT 5 silicone-type, and bleeding the system properly, gave the Kawasaki a strong, smooth front binder. Even so, there are brakes on other machines that work just as well, are less expensive and are easier to maintain.

And, as you might guess, the Honda CR250R has one of them. If all this sounds like the Honda is trying to hog the show, that's only because the CR has become the new standard by which all 250cc motocrossers have to be measured. This newest KX250 is an excellent machine, too—in fact, one of the best. But for '83, the KX is once again relegated to being Number Two. Because while this bike marks the best year yet for Kawasaki, the Honda CR250R marks the best year yet for motocross bikes in general.

—Ron Lawson

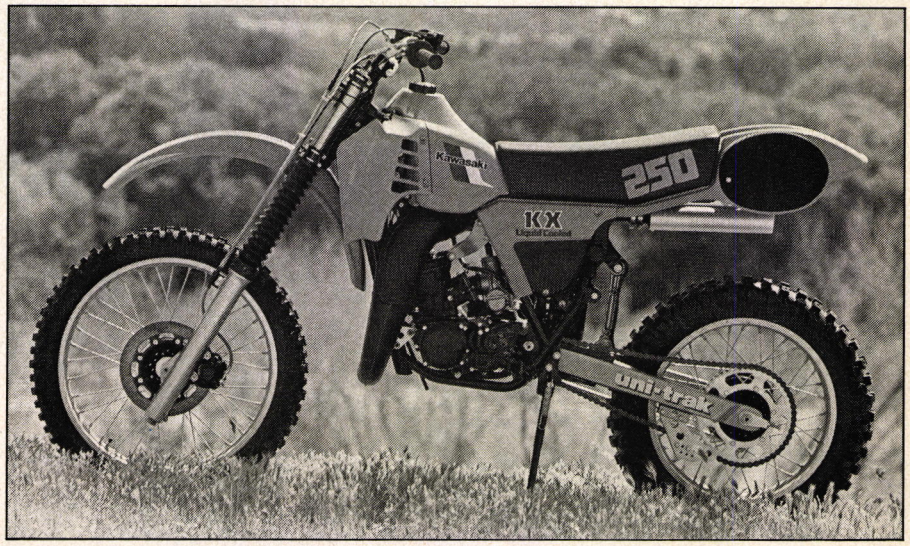
KAWASAKI KX250

Importer: Kawasaki Motors Corp.
2001 East Edinger Avenue
Santa Ana, California 92711

Category	motocross
Suggested retail price	$2219
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one main exhaust, two booster exhausts
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 64.9mm
Displacement	249.8cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	8.8:1
Carburetion	one 38mm Keihin slide/needle
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 43mm stanchion-tube diameter, compression-damping blow-off valve infinitely variable within 8 turns of adjusting screw/11.8 in. (300mm)
Rear suspension/wheel travel	single Kayaba shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 20mm spring preload range/12.1 in. (308mm)
Wheelbase	57.5 to 58.8 in. (1461 to 1493mm)
Seat height	38.4 in. (975mm)
Steering head angle	28.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.65 in. (118mm)
Weight	224 lbs. (101.6kg)
Top speed (observed)	70 mph (112 km/h)
Warranty	none
Available color	green only

Disc brake, Uni-Trak and radiators come together on the latest Kawasaki 250 MXer

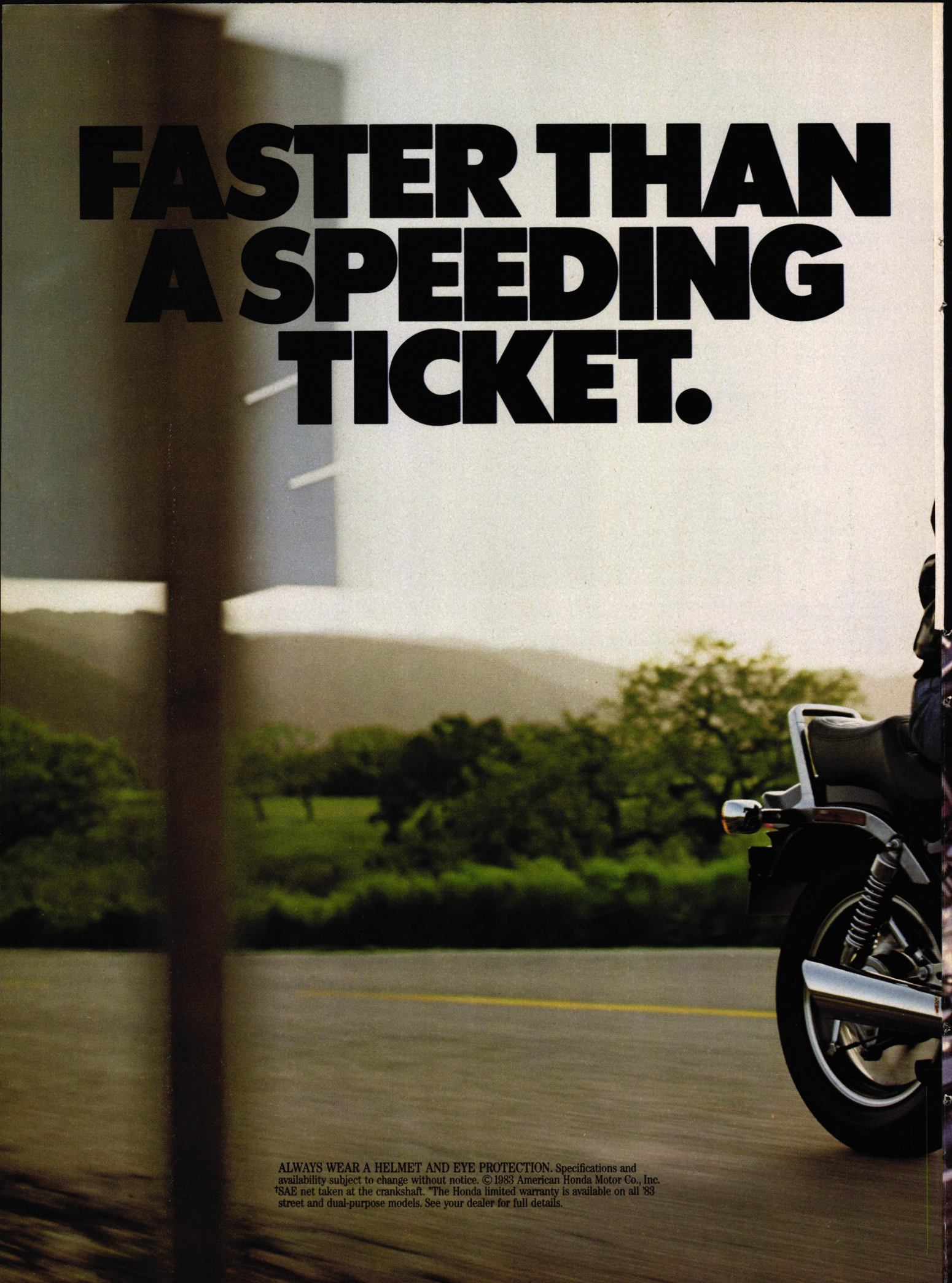
But it's sheer horsepower that makes this the best KX250 ever.



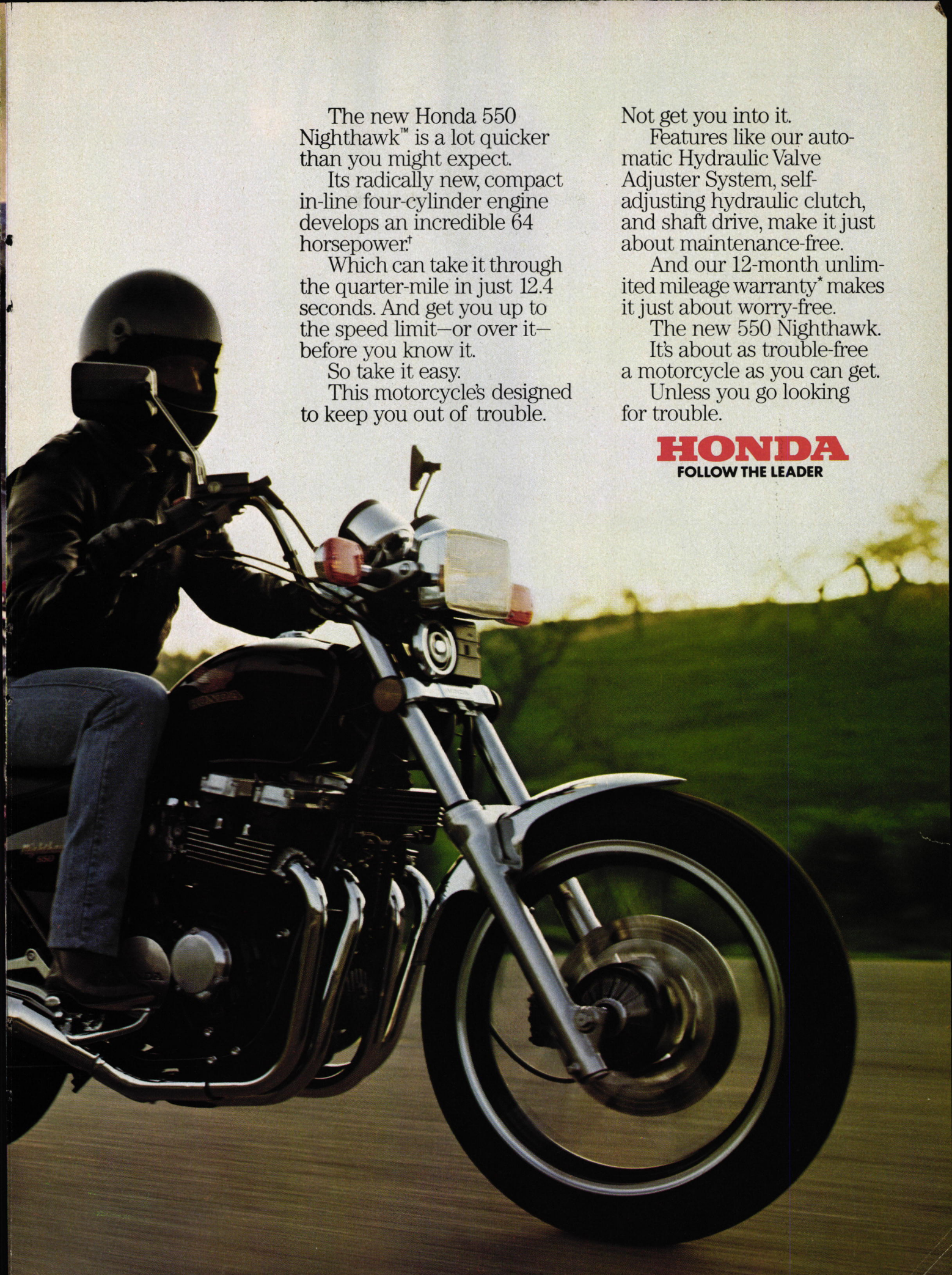
Liquid-cooling finally finds its way onto Kawasaki's middleweight motocrosser

But it's not enough to cool Honda's red-hot winning streak in the 250 class.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST



ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET AND EYE PROTECTION. Specifications and availability subject to change without notice. © 1983 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. †SAE net taken at the crankshaft. *The Honda limited warranty is available on all '83 street and dual-purpose models. See your dealer for full details.



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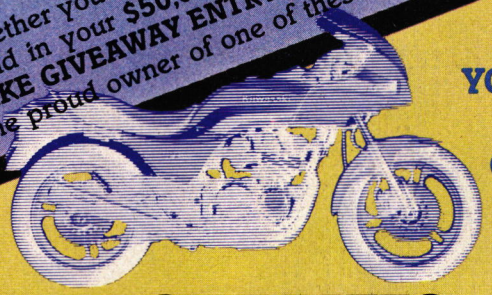

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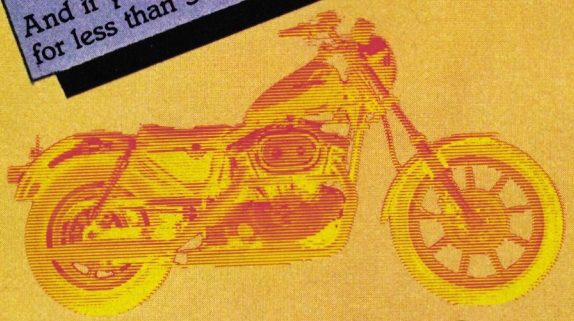

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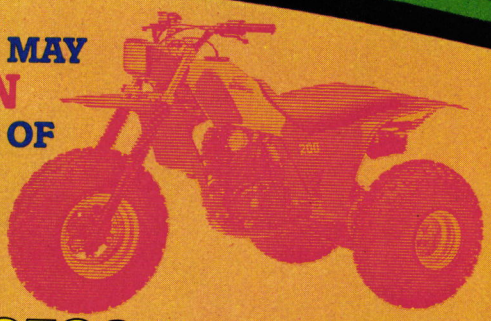

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2. All prizes will be awarded in a drawing to be held under the supervision of an independent Certified Public Accountant before January 12, 1984. Decisions of the Judges are final. Winners will be notified by mail within 30 days of Drawing.

3. All entries must be postmarked by November 30, 1983 and received by December 12, 1983 to be eligible for Drawing.

4. You may win one of a total of 191 prizes—2 Grand Prizes, 4 First Prizes, 10 Second Prizes, 25 Third Prizes, 50 Fourth Prizes, and 100 Fifth Prizes. All are guaranteed to be awarded.

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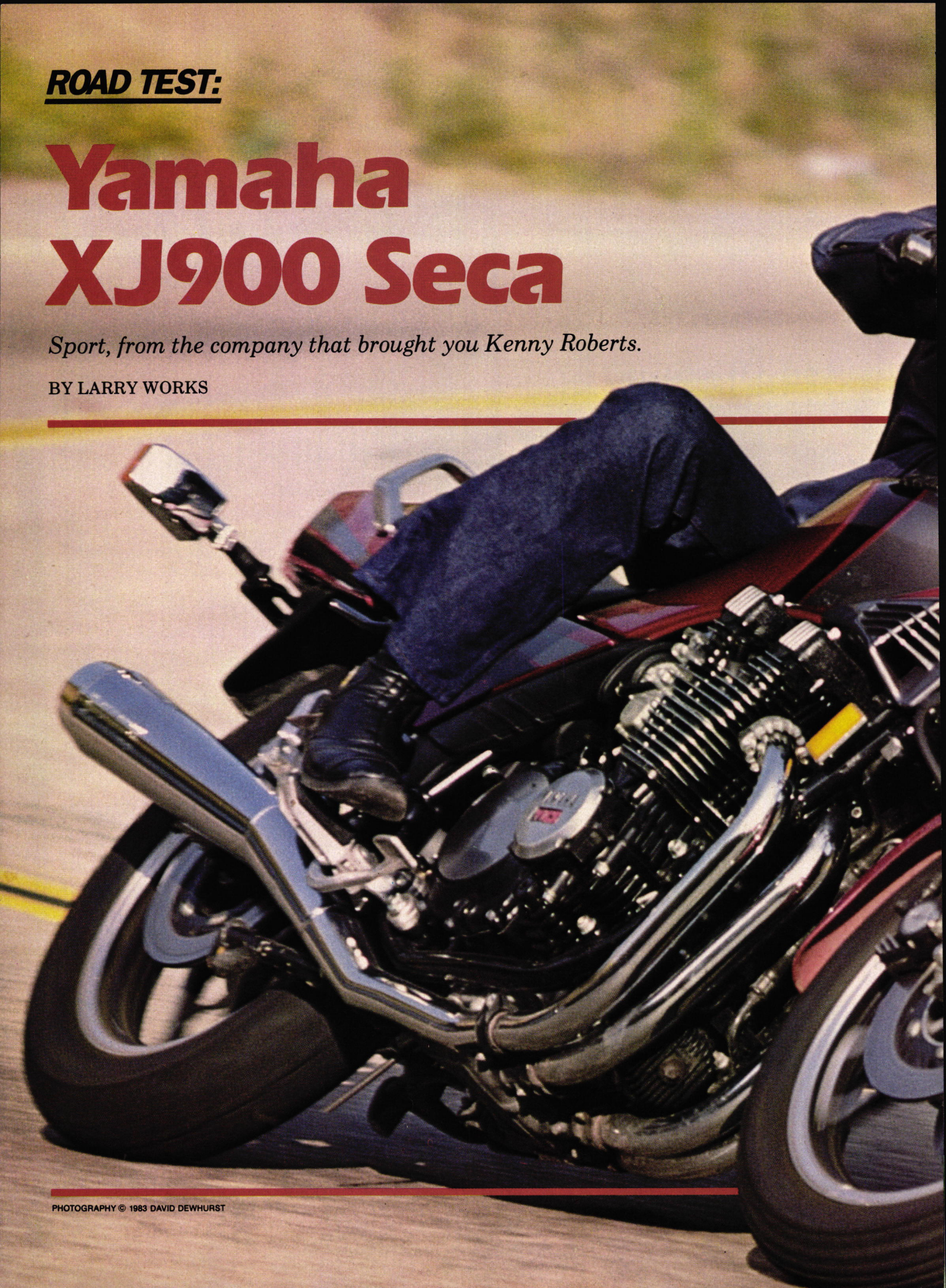
7. A partial list of prize winners will be available after February 1, 1984.

ROAD TEST:

Yamaha XJ900 Seca

Sport, from the company that brought you Kenny Roberts.

BY LARRY WORKS



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

Yamaha had a problem. The motorcycle manufacturer that was most identified with F1 racing was lacking the sportbikes necessary to turn those racing victories into sales.

Would-be Yamaha loyalists, their hunger for a big-bore Yamaha sportbike fueled by years of Kenny Roberts' wins, trekked to dealerships and found . . . Specials. Not *only* Specials, of course, but with the overriding emphasis Yamaha placed on the Special/Virago/Maxim portion of its lineup, its street sportbike array was thin, if not all but invisible. To sportbike buyers, there was a gaping, high-performance hole in Yamaha's lineup.

So Yamaha used an oft-tried technique to plug that widening gap: upgrading an existing model. In this instance, Seca 750 was restyled and modified to fill the slot of a large-displacement sportbike, and was shipped to dealers post haste as the Seca 900.

To those who understood Yamaha's problem, its immediate need to get a wheel in the door of the sportbike market, the 750 was not only the obvious choice as the basis for a new street-burner—it was the only choice. Yamaha had strayed so far out of the sport market that reworking the 750 was its best chance to get a sportbike to its dealers in 1983. Aside from that most persuasive argument, though, the 750 had a couple of points to recommend it as the basis for a new sportbike. First, when it was introduced in 1981, the 750 Seca was the quickest bike in its displacement class. Second, the Seca's narrow engine (made possible by mounting its AC generator behind the cylinder bank instead of on the end of its crankshaft) allowed an engine placed low in the frame—and so, a low *cg*, without compromising cornering clearance.

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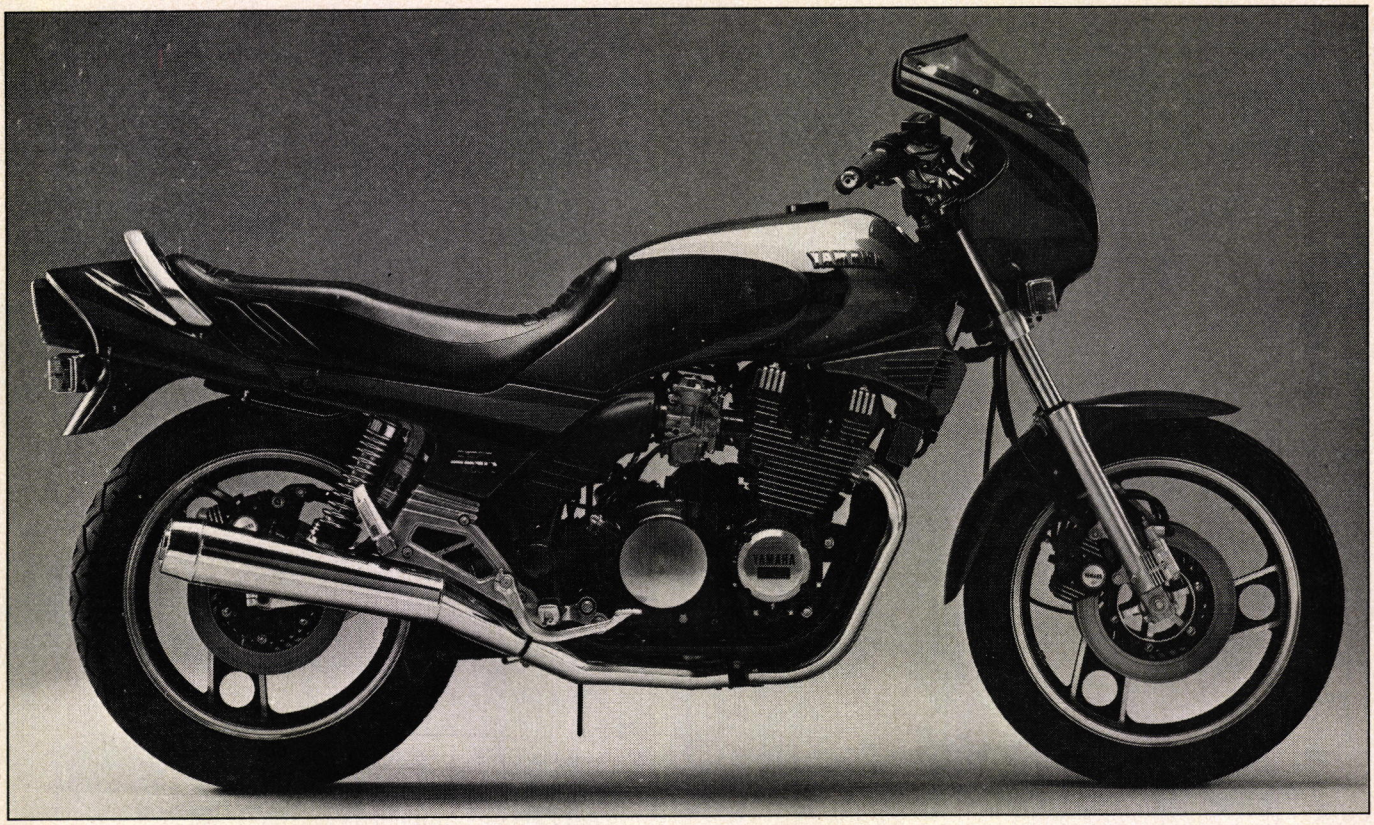


Thus, the Seca was recast as a 900. And to give the new bike its own identity as a sportbike, a facelift was in order. The 900 was styled for sport with a racy quarter-fairing, a long, sculpted tank with knee notches and twin air-scoops flanking an eight-tier oil cooler. The image was reinforced with a triple-pod instrument cluster dominated by a centrally mounted tachometer. And though the bike might seem a trifle glitzy to sport purists, there's function in some of that style. The oil cooler serves a purpose, obviously, and eliminating extraneous bits from the 750, as well as substituting aluminum footpegs, shifter and lower steering crown for steel items on the 750, pared off enough weight to let the 900 weigh-in just four pounds heavier than the original, unfaired 750 Seca.

While the styling differences between the two bikes are plain to see, a host of other changes went into making the 900. And, as you'd expect with a nomenclature jump from 750 to 900, most of them took place in the engine. The 748.6cc 750 was bored 2mm and stroked 6.1mm, giving the 900 an actual displacement of 853.2cc, which, according to Yamaha spokesmen, is the largest possible displacement increase using the 750's cases. Larger valves went into the transformation as well, giving the two-valve per-cylinder 900 36mm intake valves and 30mm exhausts (versus the 750's 33mm and 28mm units). Valve lift and timing were altered, too, though only for the exhaust valves, which have .5mm more lift, and open and close 10 degrees sooner than the 750's. Carb size was boosted also, from the 750's four 32mm Hitachis to a bank of 35mm Mikunis, which, like the 750's mixers, have no accelerator pump. The result of those changes, plus a slightly greater ignition advance and a higher compression ratio (9.6:1 vs. 9.2:1), is a claimed 85 horsepower at 9000 rpm.

Handling the 900's greater horsepower output meant recalibrating other engine internals. The clutch, like the 750's, has eight friction and seven steel plates, but for the 900, the plates were made .4mm thicker. And because of the 900's greater displacement, gearing was altered slightly to allow a slower engine speed for any given road speed. Primary- and final-drive ratios were left unchanged, as were the individual gear pairs, but the ratio of the straight-cut gears linking the transmission output shaft to the jackshaft (which carries the shock-absorbing cush drive) was lowered numerically (1.297:1 vs. 1.361:1), yielding four percent taller overall gearing. And to minimize shaft-induced chassis-jacking, the 900's swingarm and driveshaft were lengthened 30mm from 750-spec.

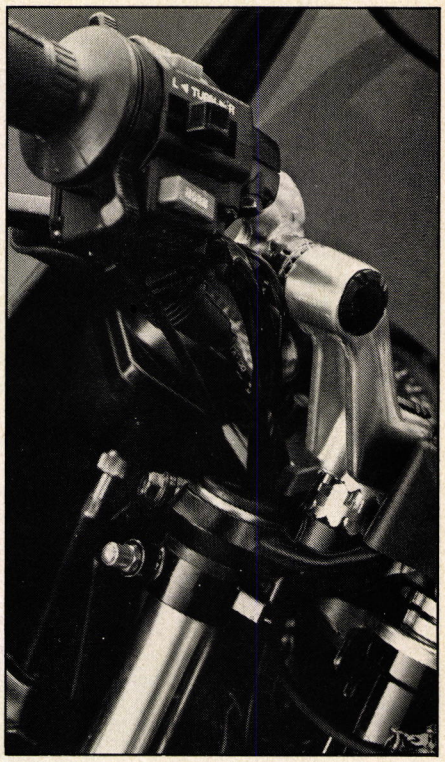
That taller gearing puts the 900's engine spinning at about 4200 rpm at 60 mph, well below the 5500-rpm mark where the motor starts to make serious power. If you're looking for a fast pass at freeway speeds, count on a downshift. And riding the 900 in fifth at 60 mph also puts the solidly mounted engine uncomfortably close to one of its vibration peaks. The engine is smoothest between 4500-6000 rpm; cruise on the Seca at around 4000 rpm and the full-time tingling through the pegs and handlebars turns annoying, while revving much past six grand turns that tingle into a shake that becomes ever-more severe as the engine climbs to its 9500-rpm redline.

There's plenty of opportunity to experience that shaking when you're riding on fast backroads, since the 900 demands to be revved to 7000 rpm or higher to keep pace with any of the 750 sporters. So you ride the Seca more like a midsize bike than a big-bore, wringing it out and shifting to keep the engine making good power. You get a good drive out of a corner with the tach needle dancing near redline, but back off a bit and that 750 you're chasing will be out of sight.

Keeping up with 750s isn't solely a function of the engine, though, since the Seca 900 suffers from mismatched suspension pieces that hamper its sport capabilities. The Kayaba fork has a specified air-pressure range of 5.7–17.1 psi, but for fast cornerwork we preferred 20 psi, just to keep the fork from bottoming. At that setting, the fork action was stiff, but

A smooth stretch of esses let the Seca strut its sport stuff

Bump-free pavement and plenty of revs are the 900's recipe for backroad charges.

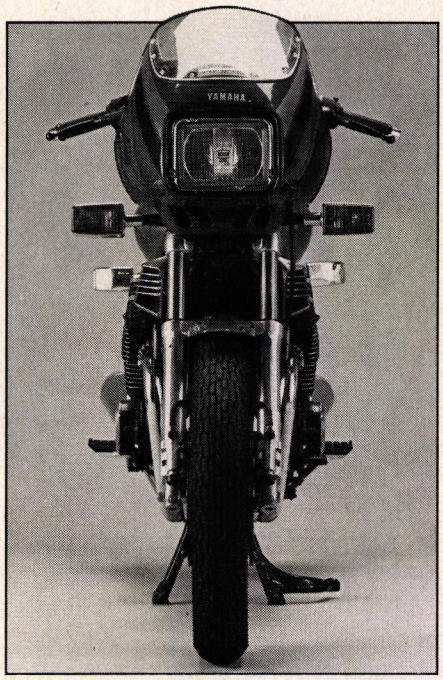


Toothed collars allow handlebar adjustment

Useful range is limited, however.

even at air pressures below that, the fork was non-compliant, refusing to react to anything short of a massive jolt. And while the fork absorbs those large-caliber bumps—harshly, at that—the smaller jounces pass straight up to the rider through the handlebars.

In the rear, the 900's Yamaha-built de Carbon shocks merely aggravate the situation. Both rates for the dual-rate springs are approximately 30 percent stiffer than those on the 750 Seca—never known for being undersprung—and the rider ends up feeling every bump. On rough pavement, with the rear suspension adjusted to full-soft preload and rebound damping, the Seca's rear end skips from bump to bump, making precise control difficult. And the Seca pays for its harsh suspension on the freeway as well. The suspension reacts moderately well to large impacts, but small, abrupt jolts, up to and including freeway expansion joints, bypass the suspension completely, leaving only a too-firm saddle as a buffer between the rider and the road.



Yamaha took full advantage of narrow motor

And built in excellent ground clearance.

At least the 900's riding position, with the rider canted forward into a moderately racy crouch, offers some relief when the pavement turns bumpy. In that position, the rider flexes at the waist with each bump, dissipating the impact somewhat. The seat/pegs relationship is comfortably uncramped, and the reach to the cast-aluminum handlebars, while a bit long for a 5-foot-10-inch rider, is not extreme. Further, the handgrips are adjustable in two planes via toothed collars, but of the 20 adjustment combinations Yamaha claims, we could make only 12 work without fouling the tank or fairing. Of those 12, only two seemed remotely usable, and to a man, each of our test riders preferred the standard setting.

While the 900's designers deemed adjustable handlebars worth inclusion, they didn't include the by-now *de rigueur* trademark of the sportbike class, the 16-inch front wheel. But the 900 seems no worse for the lack of that handling device. Light weight (lighter than all but one of the current sport 750s) and relatively quick steering let the 900 make controlled, snap transitions through fast esses, and the bike can be flicked side-to-side easily, without muscling the handlebars. There's a minimum of shaft-drive gyration, but if you do chop the throttle in mid-turn, the bike will sink on its suspension, though not alarmingly. Even if you do cut power in a corner, it's unlikely you'll graunch metal to pavement, since the 900 has excellent ground clearance. Exhaust pipes and stands are tucked in tightly; only when you've got the bike heeled over hard, with the horizon wildly out of kilter, does any metal nick the pavement, and then it's a footpeg, not some unyielding undercarriage bit, that scrapes the ground.

Even the 900's brakes seem configured for the sporting life, though they get little support from the fork. The 750's dual disc/drum setup was replaced with three radially vented discs pinched by sintered metal pads. Overall, the Seca's brakes offer good control-feel; and while it's no doubt possible to get them hot enough to fade, nothing we did on the street accom-

Continued

Styling For The Seca Sport

• One thing you can say about the 900 Seca's styling: Yamaha certainly gives you a lot of it. So much of it, in fact, that we think the bike is overstyled.

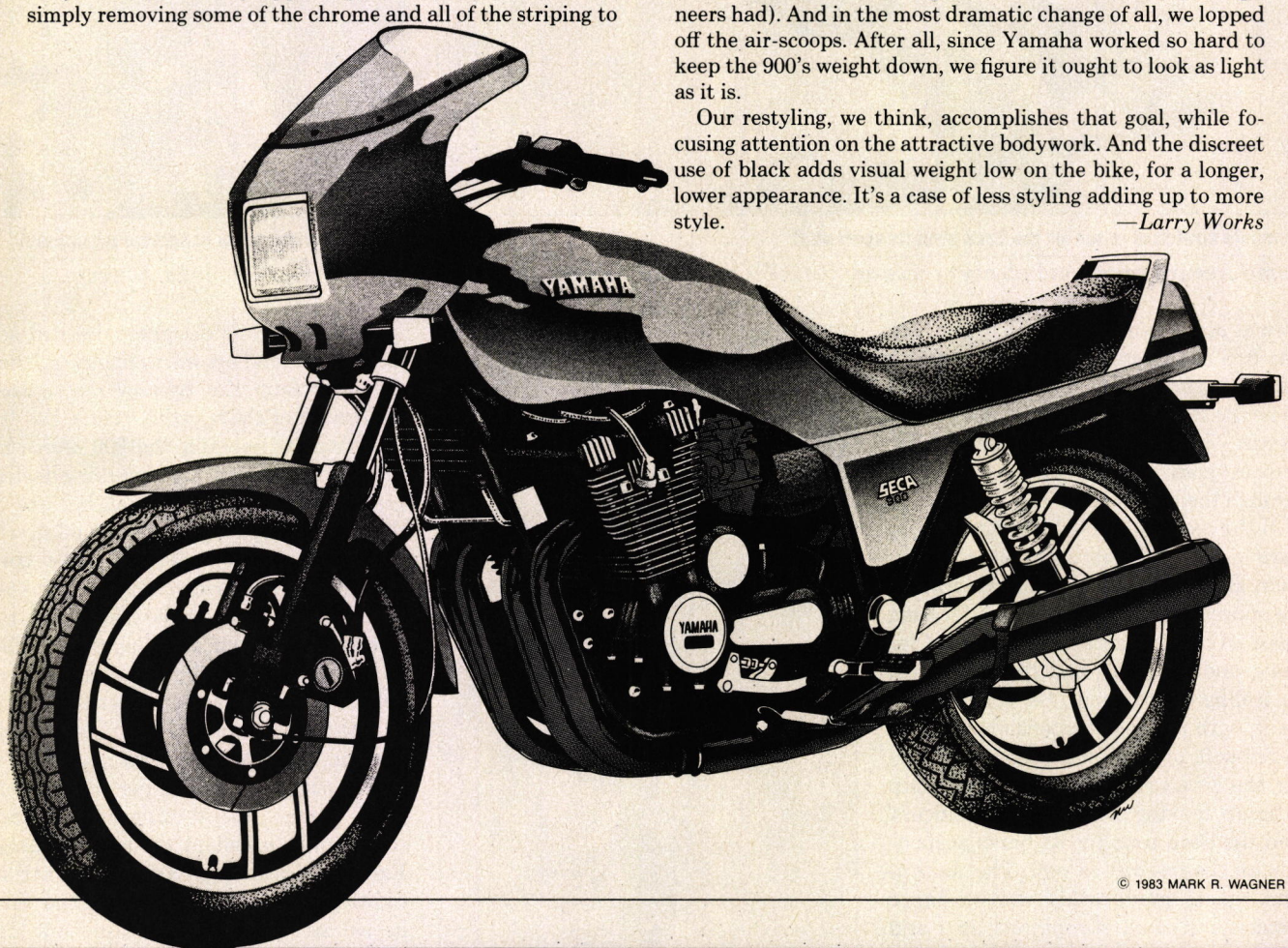
Now, you might like the 900's appearance just as it is. Beauty is, after all, entirely subjective. But to our eyes—and to the eyes of many people who commented on the bike while it was being tested—the 900 looks heavier and somehow less purposeful than it might have with a little different styling. So, at the risk of being called Monday-morning quarterbacks, we restyled the 900 ourselves—on paper, at least. We applied a few proven styling touches to help give the Seca a suit of clothes more like what they wear down on Racer Road.

Those styling licks fall into two broad categories: color and shapes. Since we thought the basic contour of the Seca's bodywork was already appealing, our styling job included simply removing some of the chrome and all of the striping to let the bodywork stand out. And, since black more than chrome has come to be identified with performance, our restyling included black exhausts, fork sliders, handlebar tips and turnsignals.

Then, mostly because we appreciate clean, simple lines on sportbikes, we ruthlessly eliminated extraneous graphic elements. The slotted front-fender brace was removed, for simplicity's sake, the same reason we restyled the ornate footpeg carriers. The tailsection and grabrail were squared-off, giving a bluff, more aggressive look. Then, the sidepanels were reshaped to follow the lines of the frame tubes, since we find nothing wrong with showing a bit of frame. Spoke-support webs in the cast rims were removed to make the wheels look lighter (since we dealt in pure style, not function, we didn't have the same strength-considerations Yamaha's engineers had). And in the most dramatic change of all, we lopped off the air-scoops. After all, since Yamaha worked so hard to keep the 900's weight down, we figure it ought to look as light as it is.

Our restyling, we think, accomplishes that goal, while focusing attention on the attractive bodywork. And the discreet use of black adds visual weight low on the bike, for a longer, lower appearance. It's a case of less styling adding up to more style.

—Larry Works



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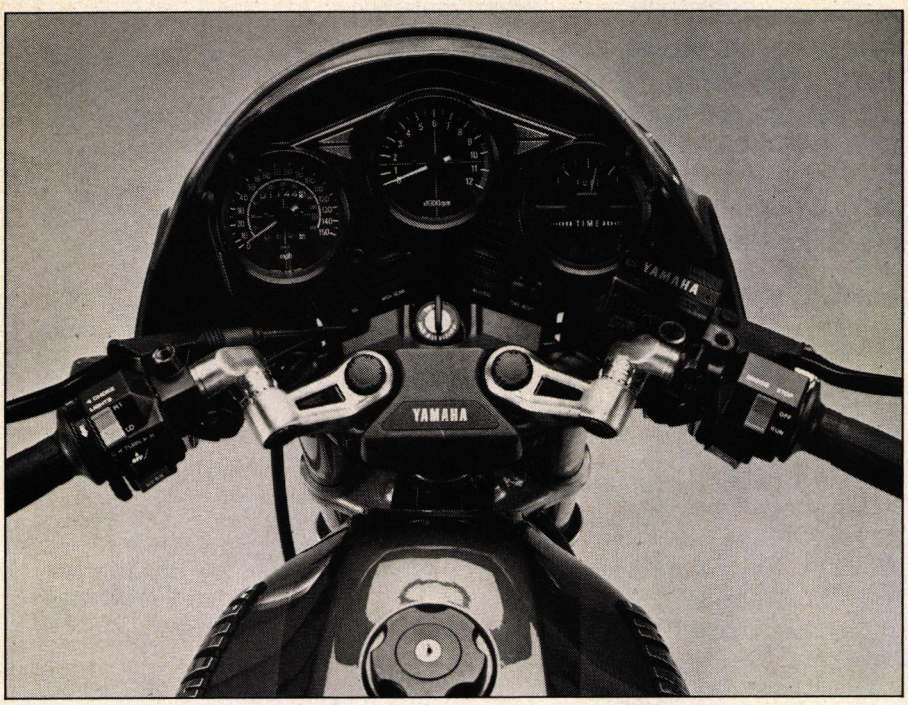
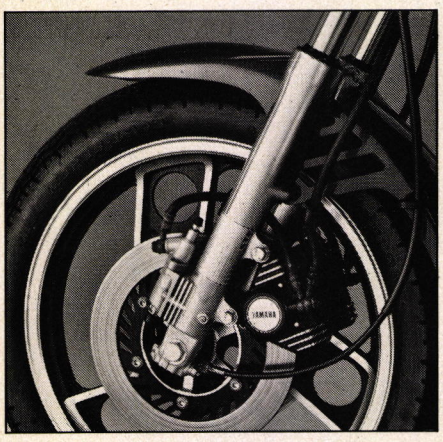
COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Yamaha XJ 900 Seca—'83	11.949/113.20	128	499	135
Suzuki GS750E—'83	11.893/112.92	131	485	135
Honda V45 Interceptor—'83	11.963/111.66	138	511	116
Kawasaki GPz750—'83	12.167/109.22	134	498	136
Honda V45 Sabre—'83	12.179/111.11	128	514	130
Honda CB1100F—'83	11.224/119.84	144	550	135



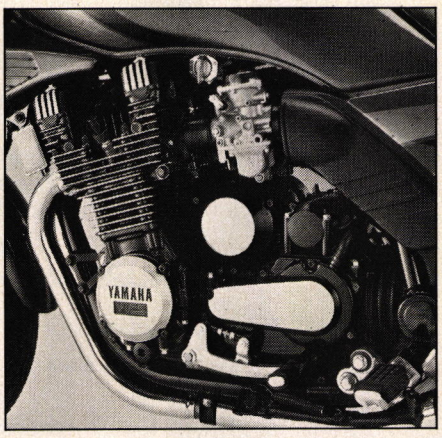
Three gauge pods—including central tachometer—reside behind 900's quarter-fairing

Bolstering a racy image, instrumentally.



Fork brace, dual discs speak performance

The anti-dive doesn't.



AC generator is mounted behind cylinders

Seca's secret to a narrow engine.

plished that feat. Yet, despite the Seca's light weight and strong brakes, the bike produced only average performance in panic-stop testing. The failure of Yamaha's anti-dive system, as well as too little fork damping, seems to be the cause. As far as we can tell, nothing has been done to alter the anti-dive unit since its arrival on the 1981 Seca. It was a novelty that didn't work then, and its presence on the 900 seems more of a sales feature than a performance advantage. Adjusting the unit to each of its four positions made no difference in the 900's braking. A hard application of the front brake produced consistent results: The fork bottomed.

And somehow, the performance of that anti-dive seems to fit the 900 perfectly. The Seca is a middle-of-the-pack performer by 750-class standards, that does nothing better than—and some things not as well as—other bikes in its general category. If that criticism seems harsh, it's only because 1983 sport standards are being applied to what is, in essence, a 1981 design. In light of Yamaha's hasty re-entry into the sport market, the 900's performance—or lack of it—should come as no surprise. But considering the state of the 750 class these days, simply being in the hunt guarantees a fair measure of performance. And there *are* reasons to find the Seca compelling: If, for instance, its looks appeal to you; if you place a high value on shaft drive; or if, like a large number of riders, you've simply waited too long for a big-bore sportbike with "Yamaha" on the tank. •

Ride Review

• Ah, does anybody at Yamaha know what time it is? No, not the hour; I'm talking about what *year* it is. Because the XJ900 Seca would have been a great motorcycle about five years ago, in the era of Suzuki's GS1000, Kawasaki's Z1-R, Honda's six-cylinder CBX and Yamaha's own XS1100. In straightline acceleration, the 900 Seca's 11.9-second quarter-mile time would have humbled them all, save for the CBX. The Seca's handling, too, would have put it right in the thick of things, because the 900 handles nicely—up to a point, that is, and past that point it begins to wobble.

But this is 1983, and big bikes turn *low* 11-second times now, and riders are no longer willing to tolerate wobblers that virtually bounce from bump to bump on twisty roads. And for me, that relegates the Seca to the bottom of the big-bike class. —*Charles Everitt*

• Some motorcycles are just so good you can't decide which feature to rave about first. The Yamaha Seca 900 isn't like that. It's not a bad bike; just unexceptional. The Seca's light feel and its riding position suit me fine, but at high rpm, the bike shakes like a cat handcuffed to a doberman pinscher. And about the best thing that can be said about the Seca's engine performance is that the bike is the fastest Japanese 900. Of course, right now it's the *only* Japanese 900.

And even if I could learn to deal with the Seca's performance, I could never live with its styling, which is glitzy enough to make a prop man from a sci-fi flick cringe. For me, the Seca is a sport-tourer that loses on all fronts: It's too slow to be a hyperbike, too buzzy to be a touring bike, and too overstyled to be *my* bike. —*Ron Lawson*

• I think Yamaha uses a different moto-dictionary than I do. Thumbing through my dog-eared motorcycling Book of Truth, looking under "S" for Sport, there isn't anything even close to describing this Seca 900. My book's definition for Sport starts off with Performance: engine. This Seca's 853cc inline-four, being devoid of midrange power and with extreme vibration at high rpm, is no standout here. My book's next category is Performance: chassis and handling. But the Seca's suspension failings, its shaft-drive-induced jacking and its completely ineffective anti-dive don't fit into my cycle-dictionary's definition of a sportbike, either.

So I'm convinced that Yamaha is using a different book here. And, judging by the Seca 900, it's a book I don't want to read. —*Joe Kress*

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Yamaha XJ900 Seca

street

IMPORTER: Yamaha Motor Corporation USA, 6555 Katella Avenue, Cypress, California 90630

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $3699

ENGINE

Type . . . . . four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke . . . . . 67.0mm x 60.5mm
Displacement 853.2cc
Compression ratio 9.6:1
Engine redline . . . . . 9500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 35mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . disposable paper element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 250-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . helical gears; 1.672:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-jackshaft drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 1.297:1 ratio
Jackshaft-to-driveshaft drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 1.056:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 2.909:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.188	14.574	5.29
II	1.500	9.993	7.72
III	1.154	7.687	10.03
IV	0.933	6.218	12.40
V	0.813	5.413	14.24

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Kayaba air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.6 in. (142mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Yamaha shocks, 12-position adjustable rebound damping, 5-position adjustable spring preload/4.2 in. (106mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual double-action hydraulic calipers, 10.4-in. (264mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . double-action hydraulic caliper, 10.4-in. (264mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 100/90V18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless
Rear . . . . . 120/90V18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G516 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

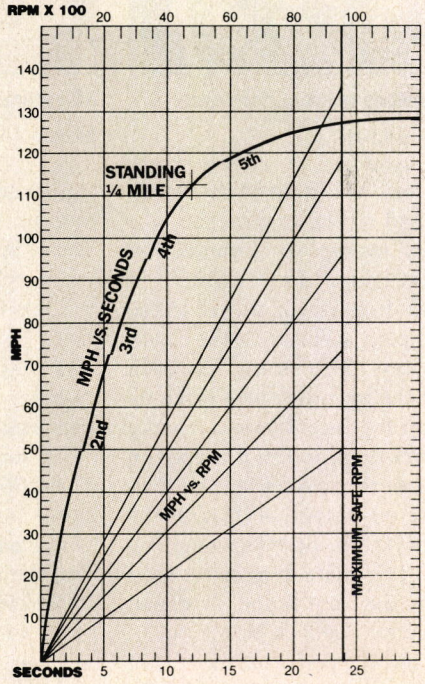
Weight . . . . . 499 lbs. (226.3kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 46.1% front, 53.9% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 960 lbs. (435kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 426 lbs. (193kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 58.2 in. (1478mm)
Seat height . . . . . 31.1 in. (790mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 27.6 in. (700mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.5 in. (342mm)
Ground clearance . . . 6.1 in. (154mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle . . . . . 27.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.49 in. (114mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.6 qt. (3.5/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.8 gal. (22.0/), including 1.5 gal. (5.5/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, LCD clock

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 34 to 58 mpg (14 to 25 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 43 mpg (18 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 197 to 336 miles (317 to 541km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 51 to 87 miles (82 to 140km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 28 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 51 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 11.949 sec., 113.20 mph (182 km/h)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 128 mph (206 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 33 ft. (10.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 135 ft. (41.1m)

WARRANTY: 12 months unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLOR: Super Red only



BETTER THAN STOCK:

Honda ATC200X

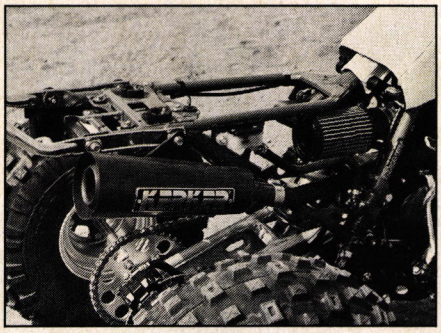
Tripletrickery for the racetrack.

• Racers will be racers, no matter how many wheels they compete on. Show them a machine with as much potential as Honda's mild-muscled ATC200X three-wheeler, and they're sure to pump the engine full of vitamins, put it on a strict training schedule and head for the track.

In fact, Kerker already has worked out just such a program for the 200: the Stage III ATV Engine Kit, which represents the highest level of performance in Kerker's line of ATC engine kits. The Stage I Kit is designed to beef up the ATC185S; Stage II aims at increasing the 200X's output by almost 18 percent. Stage III is a no-compromise racing system, claimed to pump up the 200X's delivery to more than 20 horses. Since the stocker's output is around 14 horsepower, the Stage III kit gives the 200X a 43 percent boost.

Kerker didn't take the easy route to that power increase, either—this isn't just a big-bore kit. The Stage III forged piston is only 1 millimeter larger than stock, so the ATC's displacement is still less than 200cc. Instead, Kerker concentrated on improved breathing to get the 200X into shape. The Stage III engine inhales through a 28mm Mikuni carburetor (6 millimeters larger than the stock Keihin) and the mixture is drawn into the combustion chamber through ports modified to provide a 24 percent flow increase, according to Kerker's flow bench. Also, the compression ratio has been raised from 9.6:1 to 12.2:1, and the cam has increased duration for both intake and exhaust. The motor must also exhale, and that's done through a 1⅜-inch exhaust pipe, which has a larger inside-diameter and is less-restrictive than the stock unit. Chrome-silicon alloy valve springs, a K&N air-filter element and new gaskets round out the kit and complete Kerker's transformation of the 200X from playracer to real-racer.

And that transformation is effective; once on the track, there's nothing subtle about the difference between a stock 200X and the Stage III ATC. When you jump from the stocker to the racer, you are met by an instant increase both in decibels and horsepower. There's a slight hesitation right off the bottom on the Kerker-kitted 200X, but on top it feels every bit as strong as the full-race Honda ATC250R. And the top speed of the Kerker machine, with standard gearing, is almost 10 mph higher than that of a stock ATC200X.



Filter, carb and pipe are the obvious mods

Breathing aids to get the ATC in shape.

Off the bottom, though, the breathed-on 200X suffers in comparison to a stocker. It doesn't have much less low-end torque, but the Kerker machine climbs onto its powerband more abruptly, which can make this three-wheeler more difficult to ride. If the rider's weight isn't placed just right when he exits a turn, the front end comes up—and three-wheelers don't turn well with the front wheel in the air. This tendency, however, isn't a major flaw in the Stage III machine's personality; just keep in mind that increasing the 200X's engine performance to real-racer levels requires that it be ridden like a racer.

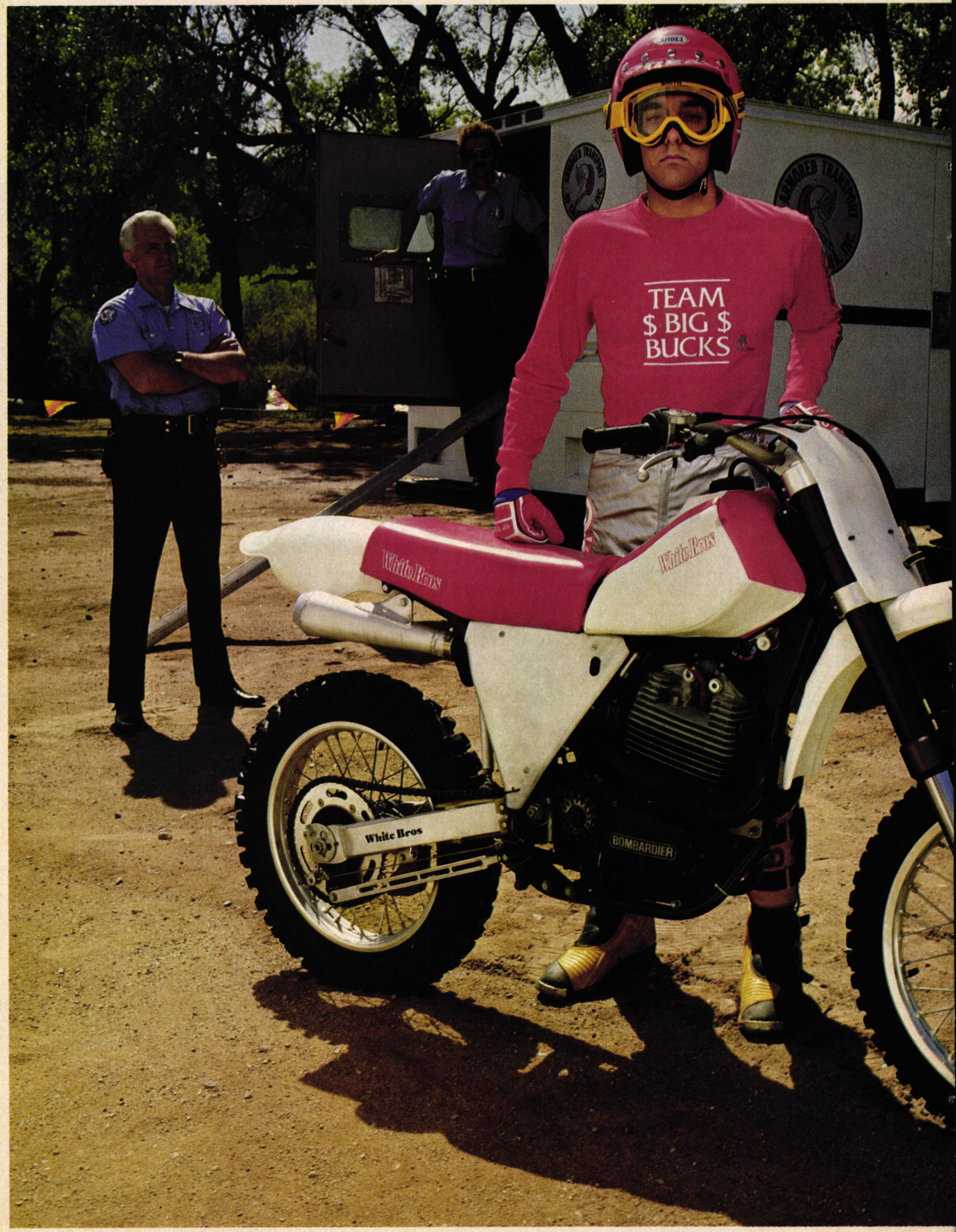
If you're watching your racing budget, though, you might consider the Stage III's effect on your bank account a greater flaw. The Kerker kit sells for $588, and when that's tacked on top of the 200X's suggested retail price of $1698, the total is $188 *more* than the purchase price of an ATC250R. And while the Kerker machine might be able to stay with the two-stroke three-wheeler on top, overall the 250 is still a much better racer because of its superior low-end power and suspension.

But if you already own a 200X, the Kerker kit represents an effective way to tap the machine's horsepower potential. And if you're a racer with a stock three-wheeler, just remember that as soon as someone pulls up to the line of the 200 class with a Stage III ATC, the odds are in his favor, not yours.

Riders interested in the Stage III Kit or any Kerker product can write Kerker, Dept. CG, 7900 Deering Ave., Canoga Park, California 91304. Californians can call (800) 382-3689; riders living outside California can call (800) 423-5246. —*Ron Lawson*

Kerker Stage III ATC Engine Kit prices:

Mikuni prejetted 28mm carb	$80
Kerker intake manifold kit	$20
K&N air filter	$15
Kerker camshaft	$95
Valve spring kit	$27
Piston kit	$70
Head gasket	$5
Base gasket	$1
Kerker exhaust	$90
Porting fee	$200
Complete Stage III Kit	$585


TEAM
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White Bros
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White Bros
BOMBARDIER

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RIDING IMPRESSION:

Open-Class Fundracing

White Bros. Formula 4 Floater

The Open class goes upper class.

BY RON LAWSON

Ever wonder how the other half motocrosses? Are there exclusive country club MX tracks where the jet set flocks to race on terrain that looks more like a golf course than anything connected with motorcycle racing? Are the berms on those manicured tracks made of some sort of astrodirt that never gets dusty? And when the elite meet to race, are there riders who never wear the same helmet twice, who have an endless supply of dazzling white motocross gear and who transport their racebikes in the security of heavily guarded armored trucks?

Probably not; at least, we know of no such racing venues. But we *do* know of a motorcycle that would fit perfectly into such a setting: the White Bros. Formula 4 Floater—a machine Howard Hughes might have owned had he been a motocrosser. On the surface, the Formula 4 could be just another one-off thumper, built in the garage of some eccentric four-stroke freak. But the White Bros. bike is a production Open-classer—though it stretches the term "production" to its limits—in that anyone who can get past the required $6000 purchase price can buy it.

If you're like most motocrossers, that figure seems nothing short of ridiculous. But what's even *more* ridiculous is that the Formula 4 is worth every cent of that lofty price. You see, the bike is the hand-built creation of Dan White, the older half (by one half-hour) of White Bros. Cycle Specialties. His goal was to make the world's most competitive four-stroke motocrosser, and to accomplish that task, he picked and chose from among the best—as well as the most exotic and costliest—components from all over the world. The resulting motocross machine has more than $5000 invested in parts alone, plus more than 80 hours of labor.

White's clarity of purpose is clear from the first look at the bike. The Formula 4's rear suspension system, for example, is similar in concept to Suzuki's Full Floater, though it differs in detail. Like the Suzuki, the Formula 4 compresses the shock from both ends, but the White Bros. bike uses a White Power Super Adjuster shock, and the handmade linkage is much more compact than an RM's. Movement is transmitted from the swingarm to the linkage and shock absorber via two adjustable aluminum struts that can vary the seat height of the machine by up to 1 inch.

And the bike's front suspension takes adjustability even further. The Floater's stock Simons UDX-60 fork can be tuned to any one of 4374 different combinations of springing and damping. The fork is identical to the unit tested in the December 1982 issue of CYCLE GUIDE, and, for that

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

matter, identical to the one used by Brad Lackey during his '82 world-championship hunt. Of course, what makes this fork stand out, at least visually, is the fact that it's built upside-down—that is, the parts traditionally referred to as the sliders are held stationary while the stanchion tubes move up and down. With its triple clamp, the fork assembly weighs 23.5 pounds, 3–5 pounds lighter than most original-equipment units, despite its larger-diameter legs.

Some other parts found their way to the Formula 4 straight from Japanese production machines. The rear hub, fuel tank and footpegs all are of Honda origin, while the front wheel, control levers and seat base come from Suzuki. The frame itself, though, can be found on no other machine because White designed it himself. His goals were much the same as those of any frame designer: Weight had to be kept to a minimum without sacrificing strength. And in the case of the Formula 4, that meant contracting C&J Industries to turn White's design into reality. That frame adds to the bike's cost, but White's goal was a track-competitive four-stroke motocrosser, not necessarily one that was cost-competitive with other Open-classers.

The same cost-no-object thinking went into the building of the motor. It began life as a 495cc Austrian Rotax four-valver, then was groomed in the hands of veteran TT-tuner Ron Woods. The head was ported, and a higher-domed slipper piston gives the motor a slightly higher compression ratio (10.7:1 vs. 10.5:1) than the Rotax-motored Can-Am Sonic MX we tested in our January '83 issue. That grooming also extends to several different states of tune, since the engine can be ordered with either a 36mm or 38mm carburetor, and with a choice of several cams. The full-race cam is identical to the one Warren Reid used when he won the first moto of the Four-Stroke National at Carlsbad Raceway on the White Bros. bike, and it makes the motor into a single-purpose racing tool. But with that cam in place, the bike also takes on a demanding personality.

Many of the qualities that make four-strokes so easy to ride get buried under the overriding concern for horsepower. The machine is a high-rpm powerhouse, producing all of its horses at higher revs than even some two-strokes can pull. At the bottom of the rpm curve, the Rotax sputters and coughs, and the power that actually gets put on the racetrack is little more than that of a typical 125cc motocrosser.

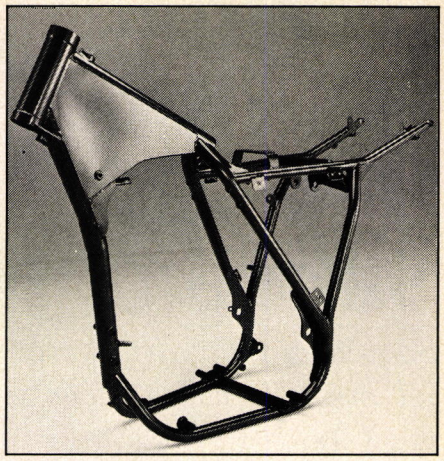
We also rode the machine with a milder cam in the engine. In that state of tune, the Rotax motor still is a revver by four-stroke standards, but it more clearly demonstrates some of the manners that four-stroke followers have come to expect. The powerband is smooth, predictable and potent. In fact, the Formula 4 will stay with the average Open-class two-stroke, largely because of its mid-range power output. The best technique

for riding the White Bros. bike is to use that midrange to make up ground where the track is twisty and traction is rare.

Of course, those tight sections also will emphasize the bike's weight; and at 252 pounds, the White Bros. bike can hardly be considered light for a motocrosser. But in most situations you'll never even think about the weight when you're riding. The Formula 4 is more agile than many two-strokes, and it's a featherweight compared to other four-strokes. You determine what lines to take, not the bike; it's just as happy railing through a berm as it is hugging the inside line. Can-Am's Sonic MX is the only four-stroke that turns with less effort. But the White Bros. bike will run away from the Sonic

Simons UDX-60 fork at the helm

Expensive parts make expensive bikes.



White Bros. did the design work

C & J industries did the metal work.

WHITE BROS. FORMULA 4 FLOATER

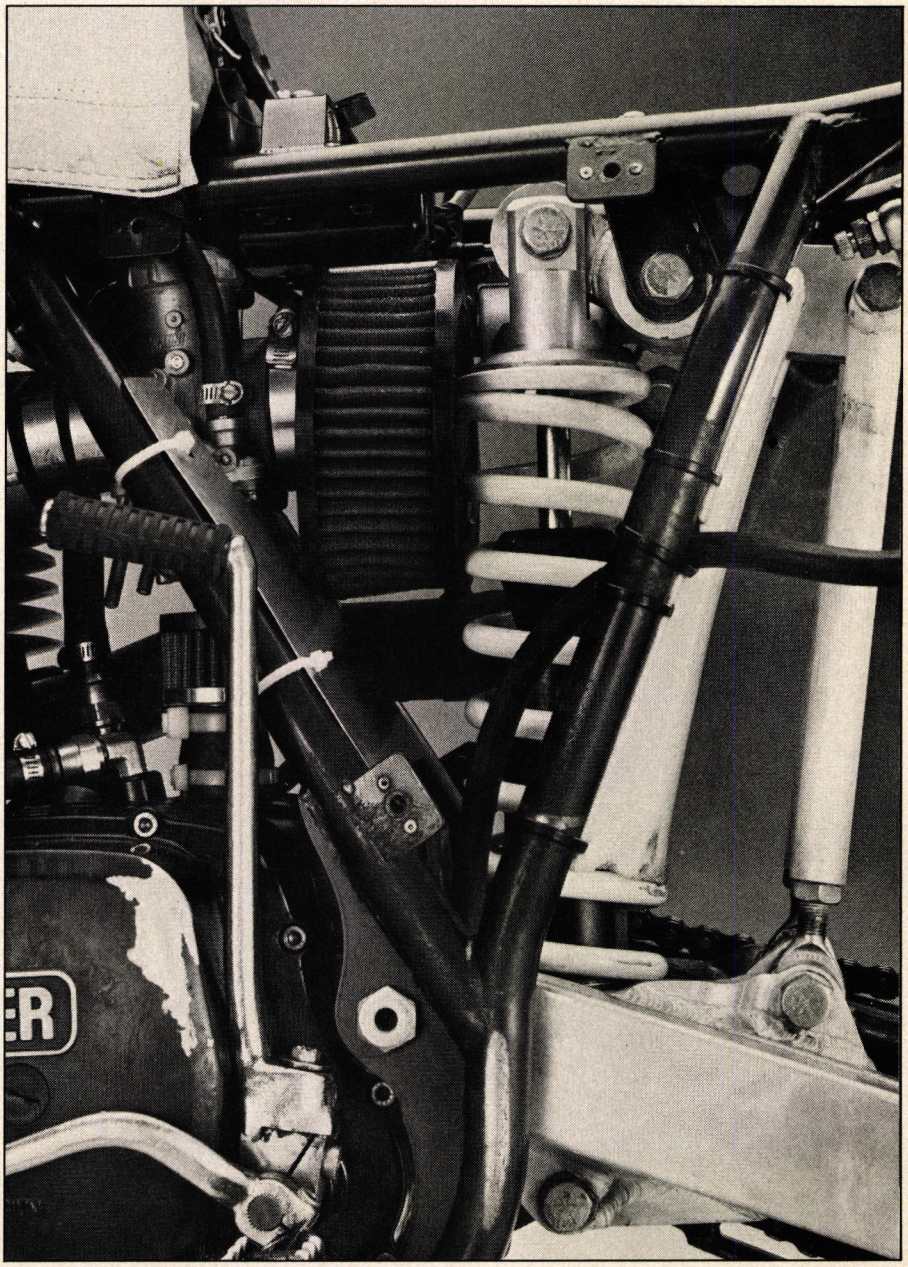
Builder: White Bros.
11750 Seaboard Circle
Stanton, California 90680

Category	motocross
Suggested retail price	$6000
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves
Bore and stroke	89.0mm x 79.5mm
Displacement	494.6cc
Compression ratio	10.7:1
Carburetion	one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Simons UDX-60, 60mm stanchion tube diameter/11.1 in. (282mm)
Rear suspension/wheel travel	single White Power shock, 8-position adjustable compression damping, 12-position adjustable rebound damping, 25mm spring preload range/13.3 in. (338mm)
Wheelbase	57.3 to 58.4 in. (1455 to 1482mm)
Seat height	37.6 in. (956mm)
Weight	253 lbs. (114.7kg)
Warranty	none
Available color	white-and-red only

where the whoops get deep, chiefly because the rear suspension of the Formula 4 is far better than any other production four-stroke MXer's. The fork on our test bike was undersprung, but one advantage of the machine is that it's built to order, so the suspension can be set up to the rider's liking. In fact, you can even have the machine assembled with, say, a Yamaha or Honda fork if you like, which would lower the initial cost.

If you're worried about price in the first place, though, it's plain this bike is not for you. There are, certainly, Open-classers that go faster and cost less. And there's nothing wrong with motocross for the masses. But the attraction of the White Bros. bike lies not only in what it can do on the track, but that it is *not* targeted for the masses. Rather, it's a monument to a lifestyle that some racers would like to become accustomed to. Think of it as a champagne cashcrosser built to scale the heights of Knob Hill.

And let them eat roost. •



White Power shock and a K & N air filter live at the heart of the White Bros. thumper

A product of selective crossbreeding and accessories from five countries.

MINITEST:

Honda VF750S Sabre

Sometimes, doing a better job means serving fewer masters.

• For Honda's V45 Sabre, life just got a little simpler. Not that the 1983 incarnation of this 750cc vee-four is much different from the original that debuted a year ago; truth is, the two are practically identical. It's just that the Sabre's future grew a lot rosier the instant Honda added the Interceptor to its lineup for 1983.

See, last year's Sabre was intended to play a multitude of roles, including that of non-serious sportbike. It wasn't meant to serve the needs of the *real* canyon-crazies, mind you, just those of riders who were intrigued with the idea of a shaft-driven vee-four with a touch of sporting blood. But a lot of riders apparently didn't understand the Sabre's inherent sporting limitations, for the bike often was criticized for its failings as a backroad scratcher.

With the 1983 model year, however, all of that has changed. The Interceptor is clearly Honda's full-sport entry in the 750 class; and the Sabre, no longer burdened with much in the way of peg-dragging responsibilities, now can get on with its intended mission: to be an all-around 750, a bike that specializes in nothing but can do virtually *anything* reasonably well, be it medium-range touring, around-town commuting or most chores in between—including an occaisonal jaunt, if not a mad dash, through the twisties.

As was the case last year, most of the Sabre's versatility stems from its liquid-cooled vee-four engine that offers one of the broadest powerbands the 750 class has ever seen. A small increase in cam lift and duration in the '83 engine, along with 1mm-larger carburetors and a larger-volume airbox, nets two more horsepower (a claimed 82 horses), explaining why our latest test bike was a tad quicker (12.179 seconds vs. 12.372) than the '82 through the quarter-mile lights. There is no sacrifice in low-end power or overall smoothness as a result, though; the torque curve remains one of the flattest in the business, often making the six-speed gearbox seem like an exercise in ratio overkill. There usually is sufficient power in almost any gear/rpm combination to handle most normal riding situations. And the rubber-mounted, 90 degree vee-four is so ethereally smooth that at times, only the swing of the tach needle—and the continued forward movement of the motorcycle—evidence that the engine is running.

Aside from its minor tuning refinements, the '83 Sabre's engine differs from the '82's in the addition of a Sprague-type one-way overrun mechanism on the clutch assembly. Mechanically, the Sabre's Sprague unit is identical to the one on the Interceptor, and so is its function: to allow the clutch to slip—rather than causing the rear wheel to break loose—if the rider doesn't dial-up enough engine revs during a downshift.

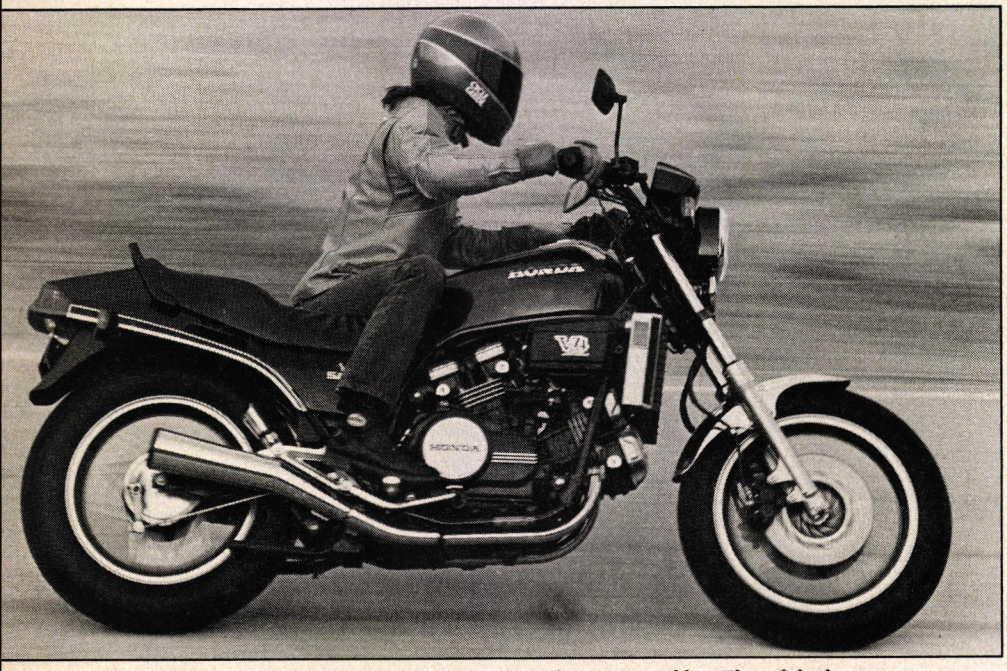
That skid-preventing improvement might earn one more high mark on the Sabre's report card, but there's one failing grade carried over from 1982 that Honda neglected to remedy: the suspension. The air-adjustable fork and single rear shock—which is adjustable for both air pressure and rebound damping—handle most larger bumps nicely, but the small, abrupt irregularities seem to go virtually uncanceled. The Sabre's seat is adequate if not exceptional, and its control layout strikes a reasonable compromise between sport and touring. But because of the harshness of the ride over smaller bumps, trying to rack up a lot of miles on anything but relatively smooth roads can be fatiguing.

Those suspension shortcomings also have adverse effects on the bike's sporting potential. The Sabre has light, precise steering and sufficient cornering clearance to permit wacko lean angles, thus it owns a basic willingness to be herded around corners at speed. But due to a mild shortage of rebound damping in the shock, plus some mild chassis-jacking typical of shaft-driven motorcycles, aggressive cornering can result in enough rear-end uncertainty to discourage any real backroad heroics.

But then, Freddie Spencer imitations are not this bike's cup of tea. Instead, the Sabre is one of the few utility players left in this age of specialization. And the Sabre wears that Jack-Of-All-Trades label well, with only a rough ride marring its otherwise excellent performance.

Ride problems notwithstanding, in the grand scheme of things the '83 Sabre ranks as a far better motorcycle than its 1982 predecessor, for two reasons. It does more; and perhaps more important, it's asked to do less.

—Paul Dean



Honda's '83-version Sabre, with just a few minor changes, outshines the original

The reason isn't those changes—it's the Sabre's more clearly defined role.

HONDA V45 SABRE

Importer: American Honda Motor Company Inc.
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$3398
Engine type	liquid-cooled four-stroke tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 48.6mm
Displacement	748.1cc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Carburetion	four 32mm Keihin constant-vacuum with accelerator pump
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.4 in. (136mm)
Rear suspension/wheel travel	single Showa air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/4.3 in. (108mm)
Wheelbase	61.8 in. (1570mm)
Seat height	30.9 in. (785mm)
Weight	514 lbs. (233.1kg)
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	12.179 sec., 111.11 mph (179 km/h)
Top speed (observed)	128 mph (206 km/h)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	130 ft. (39.6m)
Fuel consumption	33 to 46 mpg (14 to 20 km/*l*)
Warranty	12 months unlimited mileage
Available color	black; Candy Wineberry Red

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Hondaline Sport Fairing and Saddlebags

Wanna go for a tour, sport?

• You probably think of sport-touring ability as something built into a motorcycle at the factory. But the people at Hondaline, the accessory division of American Honda Motors, believe that sport tourability can also be bolted *onto* a motorcycle—if, of course, the bike in question already has a touch of sporting blood and is a half-decent long-ride mount. And since that pretty much describes Honda's V45 Sabre, it's not surprising that Hondaline has chosen that model as the foundation for its color-matched sport-touring fairing/saddlebag system.

For the most part, the fairing in this setup is similar to the OEM unit used on the '81 and '82 CBX, and to the Hondaline accessory fairings available for CB750F/900F models over the past couple of years. Overall, it's a sturdy, quality item with several useful features. The fairing's clear-plastic-covered headlight can be adjusted with a dash-mounted knob, and there are two storage compartments (the right-side compartment is lockable). The fairing's dash panel will accept two accessory gauges, and the integral mirrors are large and steady. Additionally, rubber pads cushion the rider's knees at the point where they're most likely to contact the fairing. And, strictly as an item designed to shield the rider from oncoming wind, the fairing performs well. It is nicely finished, mounts solidly to the bike's frame and flows air around, instead of at, the rider.

Unfortunately, that's the main problem with this fairing, at least when bolted to the Sabre. The fairing lacks any vents, so the already significant heat from the Sabre's vee-four engine and radiator turns the riding cockpit into a mobile sauna even on moderately warm days. Granted, the fairing does have removable lowers; but while leaving these off helps to reduce that steamroom effect somewhat, it's not enough relief to make summer tours on the faired Sabre comfortable.

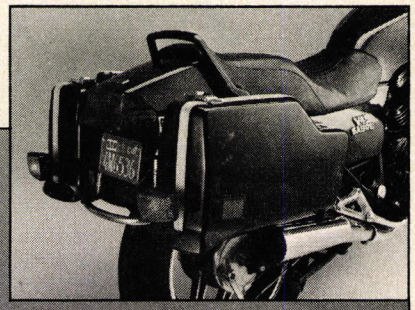
On the plus side, the fairing barely affects the Sabre's handling, imparting just a slightly heavy feel to the steering at low speeds. At cruising speeds, though, the fairing punches a neat hole in the air without generating any annoying handling traits, such as wandering or instability. And while the cockpit might be warm, there is no wind-buffeting or extraneous noise.

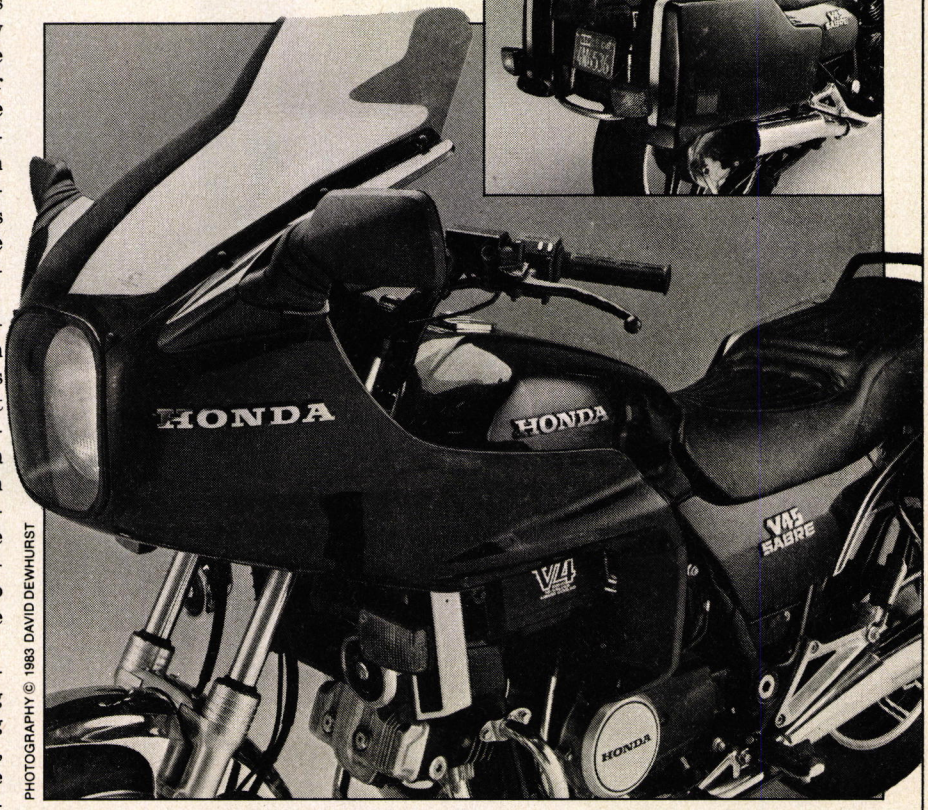
The saddlebags don't compromise the Sabre's handling, either. Like the Hondaline fairing, they're made of ABS plastic and mount firmly to the bike. Their lack of movement can be traced to the locking-pin and nylon-snap mechanism that secures the bags to their chromed brackets so firmly that a hefty yank is required to free the bags from the bike once they're unlocked.

What's *inside* those bags should be uncompromised as well, at least as far as weather is concerned. The bags open suitcase-style and seal with an aluminum tongue-and-groove closure that uses a rubber gasket. The bags showed no leakage during our test, and seem to be perfectly rainproof. However, they *aren't* capacious; the bags have an irregular shape, with deep indentations for their folding handles. But this is a sport-touring setup, after all, not a full-on touring application, so the bags really can't be faulted for their 20 x 12 x 7-inch size. In this case, that's the price of style.

And the price of the parts themselves is pretty stylish, too. The fairing's suggested retail price of $565 puts it well up in the high-zoot range for a frame-mount sport fairing. The same goes for the saddlebags, which retail for $421 a pair (plus $105 for the mounting kit).

These accessories are available at Honda dealers nationwide, which is a convenience for Sabre owners, and come with a 90-day warranty. But color-matching, sturdy construction and one-stop shopping aren't the only considerations when shopping for sport-touring equipment. Rider comfort is far more critical. And while the Hondaline saddlebags offer enough room to make a medium-length sport-tour on the Sabre more comfortable, the fairing undermines that accomplishment on all but the chilliest days. *—Don Fuller*





PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

Hondaline's sport-touring gear for the Sabre offers more than just one-stop shopping

It comes with factory fit-and-finish and Honda's guarantee, for starters.

SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Race Courses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

EDITED BY DAIN GINGERELLI

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The Conscription Act

Every flattrack racer is eligible for the draft.

• Racers will do practically anything to win. Even cheat. And a popular cheating tactic among flattrackers on mile tracks is drafting or slipstreaming. This, of course, is a way for riders to cheat the wind, not one another. It involves two or more bikes, with the lead motorcycle poking a hole in the wind, a hole that can be taken advantage of by any bike following close behind.

When drafting is done correctly, both motorcycles can go faster than either one could on its own. And it's a technique that can help offset much of the horsepower differences between the bikes in a race. As Hank Scott, one of the more successful mile racers and drafters on the Camel Pro Series, put it, "Any good rider can make a winner out of a bike that's down on horsepower—if he can draft properly."

Drafting assumes even greater importance to expert flattrack racers because AMA rules don't allow any streamlining of the bikes themselves. But with good drafting techniques, a rider can tuck in behind another bike and literally be towed so that he often has to back *off* the throttle slightly to avoid hitting the lead bike.

Traveling at speeds in excess of 120 mph creates hazards, though, and even the craftiest slipstream artists make mistakes. "I've hit other bike's exhaust pipes, tires, even handlebars when passing," said Scott, and he's quite aware of the consequences if the bumping gets too aggressive. Hence, the biggest secret to successful slipstreaming is knowing when to shut off for a turn. Be-

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Ricky Graham with the checkered flag

What every racer slingshots for.

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Randy Goss (6) finds the way around another rider in a slingshot move

Taking the horsepower out of the other guy's wind.

Randy Goss and teammate Scott Parker at ease before a Mile race

Their draft exemption ends when the green flag drops.

cause his peak speed is increased, a rider can't rely on his normal shut-off points to dictate when to pitch the bike sideways for the turn. Instead, he has to compensate, sometimes even taking a different line into the corner to allow for the speed bonus he got from the drafting move 200 yards back on the straightaway.

Racers work extra-hard to earn that bonus on the straights, but some tracks make the job easier than others. And the track with the biggest bonus-straight is the Indianapolis Mile. Its long back straightaway has a tall canvas barrier on the outside wall of the track; thus there are no crosswinds—ideal conditions for drafting. Most Camel Pro riders agree that an eight-bike-length deficit at Indy can be made up on one lap just by slipstreaming.

Drafting benefits the lead bike, too, and not just because its wake is smoothed-out by the trailing bike's proximity. The affected wind turbulence also helps the lead rider know when he's about to be passed: "You can feel the surge of wind as the rider behind you makes his move," says Jay Springsteen, who's won more mile races than any other rider. "Then you feel him come around."

A pass using the slipstream is called a slingshot, and that move has become almost second nature to many top Camel Pro Series racers, who use it to gain speed and distance on other riders. Ricky Graham pointed out after his San Jose Mile win last May that his dicing and slingshotting with

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

The turf gets crowded on a Mile track when racers form a long line to share one another's air pockets

By forming a single file, two riders—the lead and trailing riders—control the pack's aerodynamics.

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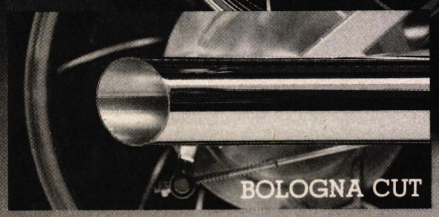

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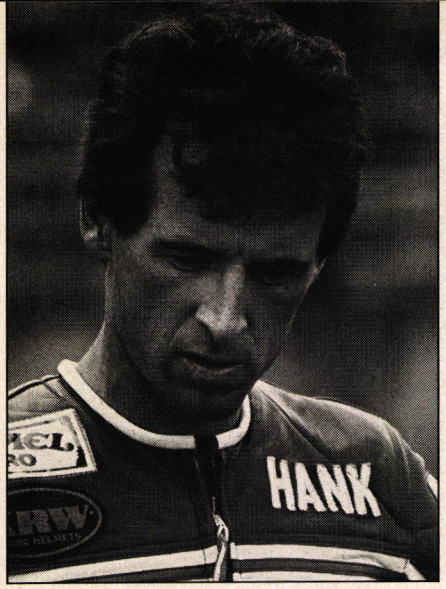

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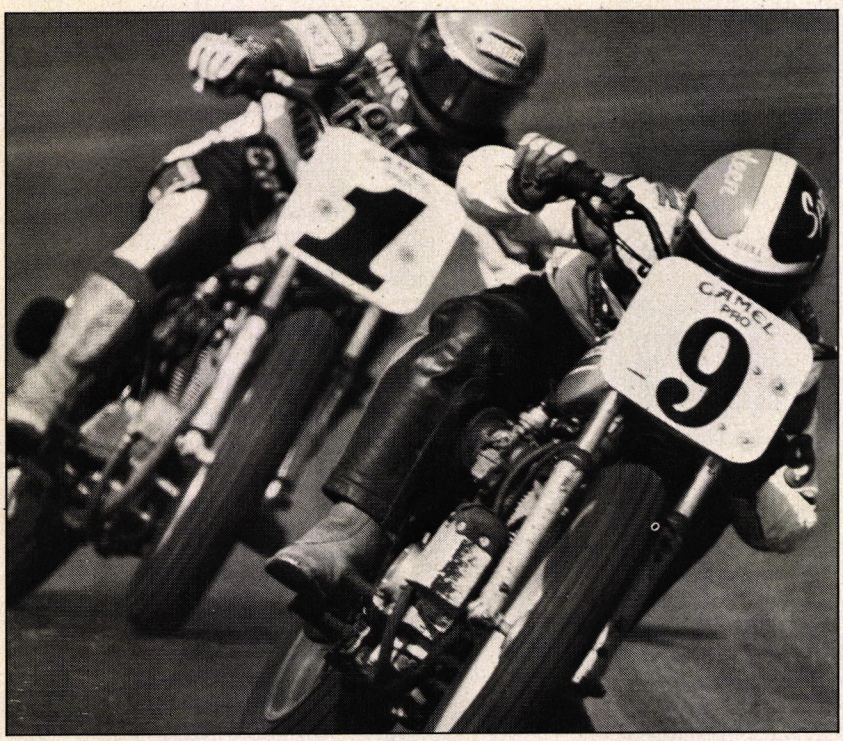
Hank Scott before the Springfield Mile

Thinking about the conscription act.

Springsteen allowed both bikes to go faster than the four-bike pack battling behind them for third place, and they exchanged the lead about an equal number of times during the 25-lap race. "It's always better with only two guys," said Graham. "Three or more and it gets slow. I was happy with the lead-changing, and the fans liked it. I just wanted to lead at the start/finish line each time to get lap money," he jokingly added, referring to the prize money paid for leading each lap by various race sponsors.

It goes without saying, though, that he got the most pleasure leading the *final* lap. Because that's the one that counts. And it's the lap a slingshot specialist works hard for during the 24 preceeding go-rounds of a Camel Pro Series Mile. Even if it means cheating—the wind. —*Dain Gingerelli*

Hitching a Ride



• Slipstreaming is a way literally to pull horsepower out of thin air. It's a way to make a fast bike faster, perhaps even to make it a winner.

Essentially, slipstreaming makes use of the aerodynamic effects air has on a bike and rider at high speed. Wind resistance pushes against the bike at the front, while a turbulent low-pressure wake pulls at it from behind. This is called drag, and a motorcycle traveling down a straightaway at speeds in excess of 120 mph creates a lot of it. For a bike to go faster on any given straightaway means either reducing drag (through improved streamlining) or overcoming it (through additional horsepower).

But two riders traveling in single file can help each other reduce drag by slipstreaming. It works like this: The first rider breaks a hole in the wind, so the second bike passes through much more easily. The trailing bike pays its dues, too, by helping smooth the lead bike's wake. So, in essence, the two bikes traveling in tandem create about the same amount of drag as does one bike. It's a cheap way to go fast, and many smart racers will do exactly that by slipstreaming. They look at it as free horsepower. And what racer can turn down something that's free? Especially when it helps him go faster.

—*Jerry Smith*

Continued

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MOTOCROSS:

Brad Lackey's Relief

No factory ride means no pressure.

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Brad Lackey was flying high as a kite at Carlsbad this year

With no points to chase, he could race the USGP his way.

• Whenever Brad Lackey lined up for the start of a Carlsbad Grand Prix, the pressure was on—either to be the first American ever to win the USGP, or to gain points toward the 500cc world championship. And for someone who's raced in every USGP since the race's inception in 1973, that's a lot of pressure.

Marty Moates gave Lackey some relief in 1980 by waltzing to a one-one day, becoming the first American to win the home GP. Lackey stewed in the Carlsbad pressure-cooker two more times before he finally put the hometown points to good use, and won the world title last year.

But for the 1983 season, Lackey felt a different kind of pressure, even before Carlsbad. He was the defending World Champion, and he didn't have a ride for the series. Suzuki didn't rehire him, and the other factories expressed no interest in putting his Number One plate on their machinery. As a member from another team put it, Lackey "burned a lot of bridges through the years to get the title—now he can't get any more rides to defend it."

Lackey finally put together a Carlsbad-program, but it was, by his normal standards, second-rate. He rode a *stock* Yamaha YZ490 in America's premier event. The deal was simply to get the world

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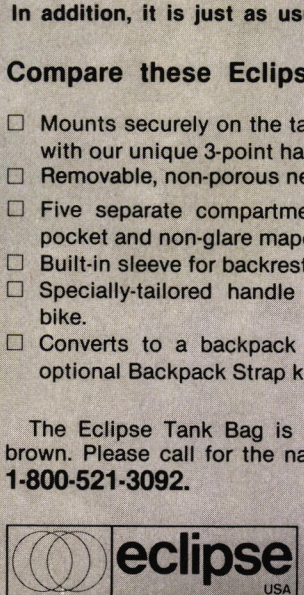

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champ—America's champ—to the USGP; nothing more. Besides, Lackey already had committed most of his time this year to several other projects, including a motocross-training film, and a sport-clothing business co-owned by another American World Champion, Kenny Roberts.

Finally, with Carlsbad only weeks away, The Champ gave serious thought to the race itself. For a quick tuneup, he entered a Supercross in Toronto, Canada, finishing 12th after a poor start. He rode cautiously in the Canadian event, leading one industry observer to comment that "he looked terrible out there."

But it *was* Lackey's first taste of competition since he quit last September, and it *was* a Supercross event, which requires a different strategy than does outdoor motocross. Indoor racing, it's been said, better suits a rider with a quick throttle-hand, not a quick mind. And Lackey is a thinking-man's motocross racer. He'd be ready for Carlsbad, he promised.

The Champ even went so far as to state publicly that he figured on winning the race. The pressure was off, he pointed out, and now he could get down to the business of winning this race, not just holding a position to gain points. Points meant nothing to him this season.

Kent Howerton took fourth overall

On the comeback trail with Kawasaki.

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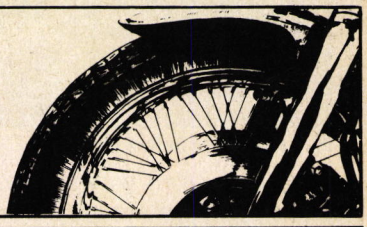

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Lackey and Glover before the USGP

Relaxed under the California sun.

In the first Carlsbad moto, Bad Brad rode well, but was hindered by a broken seat and exhaust pipe on the YZ, holding him to fifth place. The parts were replaced, and his sixth-place finish in the second moto gave him fifth overall for the day.

His performance prompted him to suggest that he was capable of going "back this year and go for first through fifth positions in any race." Lackey made another interesting, and typically provocative post-race observation: "I came out to see if the Europeans were going any faster (than last year)." He gave his usual dirt-eating grin, then added, "They didn't seem it."

That is, except for Sweden's Hakan Carlqvist, who traded moto-wins with American Broc Glover. Carlqvist had a quicker elapsed time than did Glover, so he placed first for the day. Glover and Carlqvist both rode Yamahas. Third overall was another American, Suzuki's Alan King, while Kawasaki's Kent Howerton finished fourth.

The absence of pressure finally allowed Lackey to enjoy Carlsbad, though. "It's still fun (to race) and I'd like to do it if I can work out the right deal." The "right deal" obviously doesn't include pressure, though. From now on, Brad Lackey, World Champion, is taking it easy—that is, until the gate drops, and the racing starts.

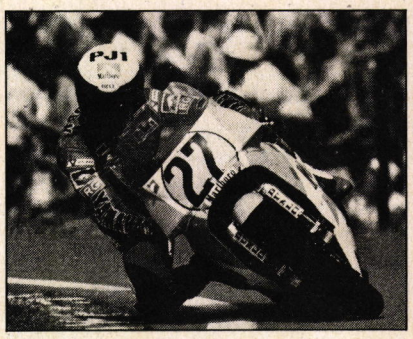
—Dain Gingerelli

Hakan Carlqvist wasted little time in assuming the pressure

He traded wins with Glover to take first overall—and the points lead.

Pit Bits

• Red, white and blue: Kenny Roberts saw red at the Austrian GP and won easily over the second-place finisher, teammate Eddie Lawson. Suzuki-mounted Randy Mamola fought hard to finish third, giving American riders their second hat trick of the Grand Prix season.

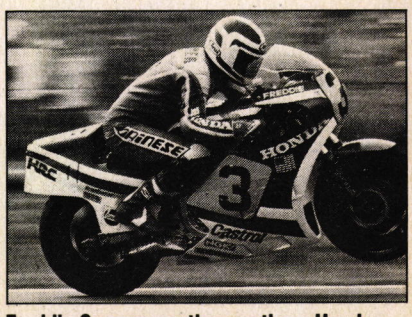


Eddie Lawson in Europe

Playing backup to Kenny Roberts.

• Handicap feature: While the Yamaha camp celebrated its one-two, Suzuki spokesman Gary Taylor was surprisingly frank about Mamola's effort. "The Suzuki factory is very grateful for Randy's ride," said Taylor. "We are most proud that he didn't give up, especially the way the bikes are over last year. . . . What you saw today was a number-one rider on a sixth-position machine."

• Remaining the leader: While Suzuki made excuses for its machines, Honda has explained that there is no substitute for the three-cylinder NS500F that's earned Freddie Spencer four wins and the 500cc GP points lead. According to a Honda spokesman, plans for a new GP bike this year have been shelved by Honda Racing Corporation, and Spencer, along with teammates Marco Lucchinelli, Takazumi Katayama and Ron Haslam, will conclude the year on the existing vee-three.



Freddie Spencer on the vee-three Honda

Will they add another cylinder?

• Rumor: Still, talk persists in GP circles of a new Honda vee-four to be debuted before the season ends. If so, Katayama, who helped pioneer the ill-

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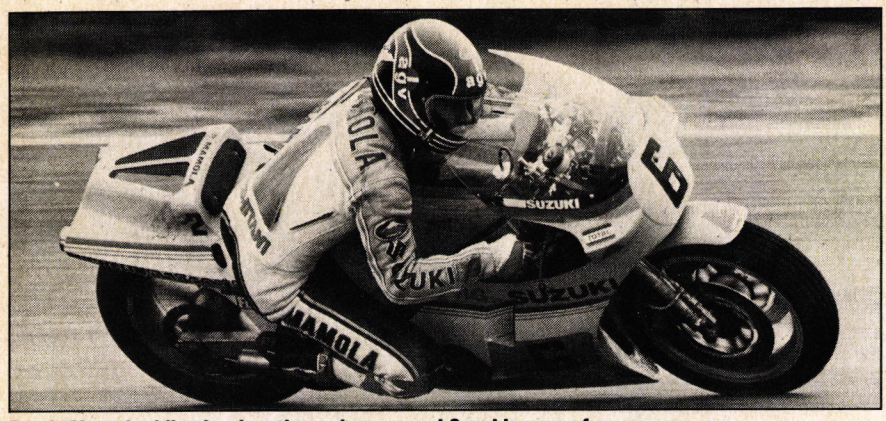

Randy Mamola riding hard on the underpowered Suzuki square-four

And by never giving up, he hangs on to third place in the points battle.

fated NR500 project, probably will get saddle duty on the new bike.

• And Yamaha makes three: Following his second-place finish behind Freddie Spencer at the Spanish GP, Kenny Roberts joked that to make his Yamaha OW70 vee-four faster would require "taking one cylinder off and making the other three bigger." Just like on Spencer's Honda.

• Lima-to-Rio Rally: Sources close to Paris-to-Dakar Rally organizer, Thierry Sabine, say the French rally promoter is planning a South American version of his Europe/Africa moto-safari. Sabine has proposed a Lima-to-Rio Rally, which will begin in Lima, Peru, trek across the Andes Mountains into the plains of Paraguay, then through the jungles of Brazil, to finish in the Atlantic resort city of Rio de Janeiro. The course will be about 6000 miles long.

• Suzuki Superbike: According to sources at Suzuki, former GP-roadracer Pat Hennen is building a GS750ES-based Superbike. Hennen will turn the wrenches, while up-and-coming roadracer Brad Taylor will turn the throttle on the more-muscular GS750.

• Yoshimura returns: Hennen is not the only person interested in a Suzuki

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Paris-to-Dakar riders drift in to a checkpoint at North Africa

Stay tuned; they're headed for South America.

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Pit Bits

Graham Noyce (4) and Andre Malherbe (5)
Both want to regain the world title.

Superbike. Yoshimura R&D, once a dominant force in the AMA's streetwise class, has been developing a Superbike of its own. Rumors have the Yoshimura and Hennen bikes weighing about 20 pounds less than the Honda Interceptor factory Superbike racers.

• Yoshimura R2 D2: Fujio Yoshimura, curator for Yoshimura's speed shop, has been using a computer to help design and develop speed equipment. Evidently, Fujio has relied on the computer to develop the new Superbike as well; specifics such as frame geometry, suspension rates and cam timing have spawned from his microchips.

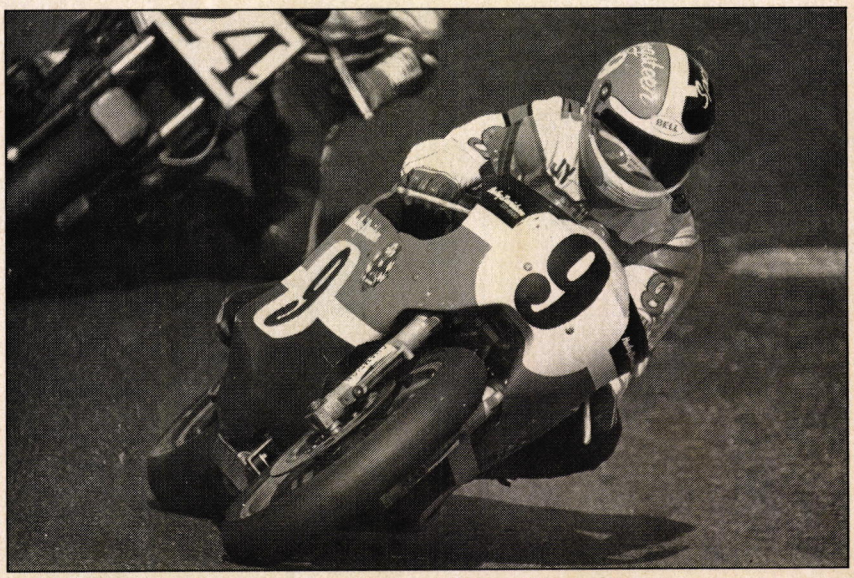
• Miles to the next stop: Miles Baldwin did at Elkhart Lake what privateer roadracers have been trying to do since 1981, when Nick Richichi won Loudon: win an AMA National. Baldwin was victorious after Mike Baldwin (no relation) had to park his broken Honda RS500 on the second lap of the race. Apparently, Miles Baldwin's Wisconsin success elevated his stature enough that he showed up at Loudon two weeks later with new yellow-and-white leathers, complete with Cam 2 sponsor patches.

• Formula 1 revised: The AMA has announced new Formula 1 rules in which the following engine sizes constitute the premier roadrace class: 500cc two-strokes, 750cc four-stroke fours, 1000cc four-stroke twins and 750cc two-stroke fours built prior to 1980 (meaning Yamaha TZ750s).

• Springsteen's pair: Jay Springsteen finished 13th at Loudon on his XR-1000R in the F1 Main to earn two Camel Pro Series points. While two points might not sound like much, especially considering it took 75 miles to earn them (versus 20 points for his most recent flattrack win, the 10-miler at Harrington), Springsteen and Harley-Davidson felt it was worth the trouble. After all, last year's points battle with Ricky Graham went down to the wire, and the Springer lost, 221 to 219.

• Quote Department: While Springsteen is perhaps not a stylish knee-dragger on the pavement, he certainly knows how to hang his left foot out on the dirt tracks. Following his second-place finish at the San Jose Mile, he commented, "I could still feel the heat from my steel shoe through my boot when I was standing on the victory stand after the race."

—Dain Gingerelli



Jay Springsteen forging his way to a 13th-place finish and two points
The point was clear: Earn as many Camel Pro Series points as possible.

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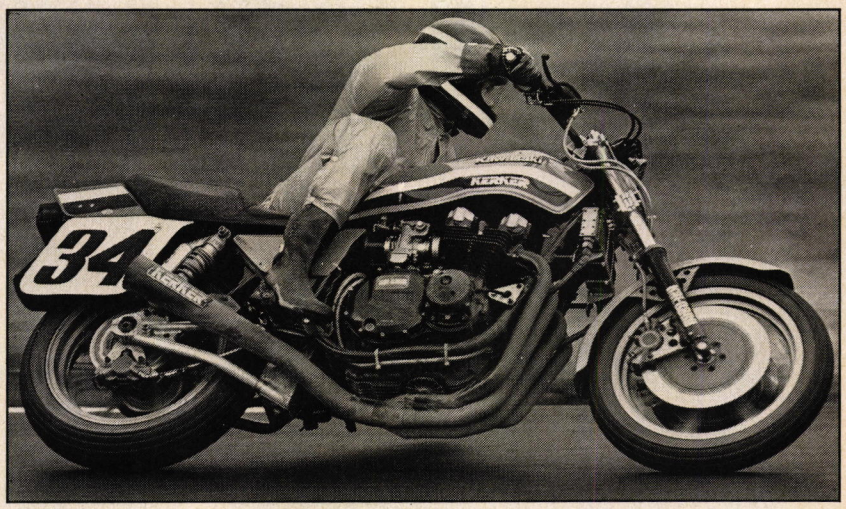

Wes Cooley wearing rain gear aboard his rain-tire-shod Kawasaki 1000

It's a super bike for racing during foul weather.

• At the Mid-Ohio Formula 1 National, Wes Cooley broke the roadracer's code: He hoped it would rain.

Normally, roadracers treat rain like a social disease: It's a nasty, four-letter word that calls for cautious riding, plus the changing of suspension rates because the bikes have to use tires with tread. Cooley's rain-wish was understandable, however, since he had ridden his Kawasaki well in the wet during practice. And if it rained in the race, the Green Machine stood its best chance yet of winning a roadrace this year.

It wasn't the new Bol D'Or-based F1 Kawasaki that Cooley rode, though. It was instead a bike that, for the past two years, had been a thorn in his side: Eddie Lawson's 1982 Superbike, the same machine Cooley had chased too many times with his Yoshimura/Suzuki.

The ex-Lawson bike had been made available to Cooley because Kawasaki included it in the F1 stable *only as a spare*. The thinking was that rather than scrap the bike (the AMA's 750cc rule had made it illegal for Superbike racing), it might make a good backup F1 machine. Kawasaki team members even believed it would work well in the rain. "Its high handlebar," said Cooley, "gives more stability for rain and for racetracks with tight turns."

Speculation about this bike's aquatic abilities ended during Saturday's practice. As expected, the '82 bike, with Cooley at the controls, set fastest practice times in the rain; faster, even, than Honda's Mike Baldwin, who had two new RS500 two-strokes to choose from.

Thus, the stage was set for a Kawasaki upset—if it rained. And all morning on race day, members of the Honda and Kawasaki teams maintained a constant surveillance of the skies. Udo Gietl, Honda's team manager, hoped for clear weather so that Baldwin could utilize the speed of his smaller two-stroke. But Kawasaki chief Gary Mathers knew the odds favored his warrior in the wet, so he mentally performed a rain dance.

Honda won the weather war and everyone lined up on the grid with slicks. Cooley elected to ride the '82 Superbike, even in the dry, giving Baldwin all the advantage he needed to sprint to the lead. Baldwin's glory was short-lived, though, when rain halted the race. AMA race officials put out the red flag to give the racers the opportunity to change from slicks to rain tires.

After the restart, the fickle skies cleared, and Baldwin's lightweight two-stroke fared better with rain tires on the dry track than did Cooley's older, heavier 1024cc four-stroke. Kawasaki's chance of a win had gone down the drain with the last drop of rain that had fallen—or so it seemed. But with less than 10 laps remaining in the race, the weather see-sawed in Kawasaki's favor as the rain returned. Cooley charged

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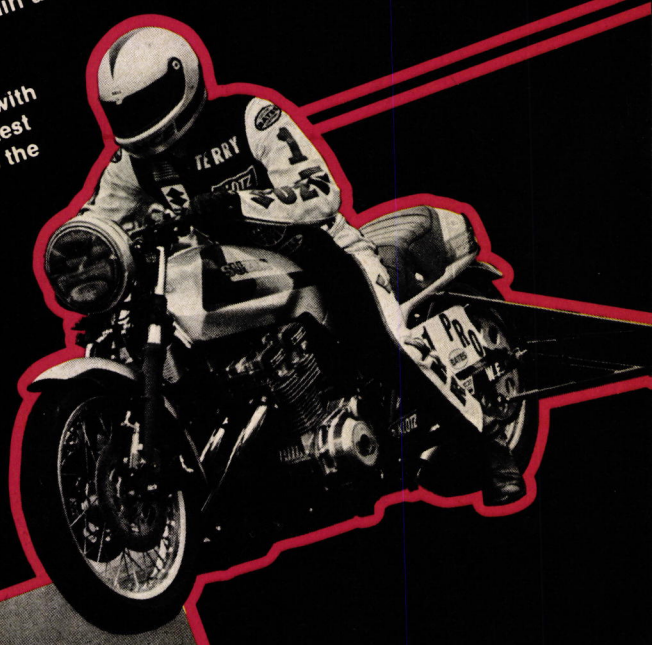
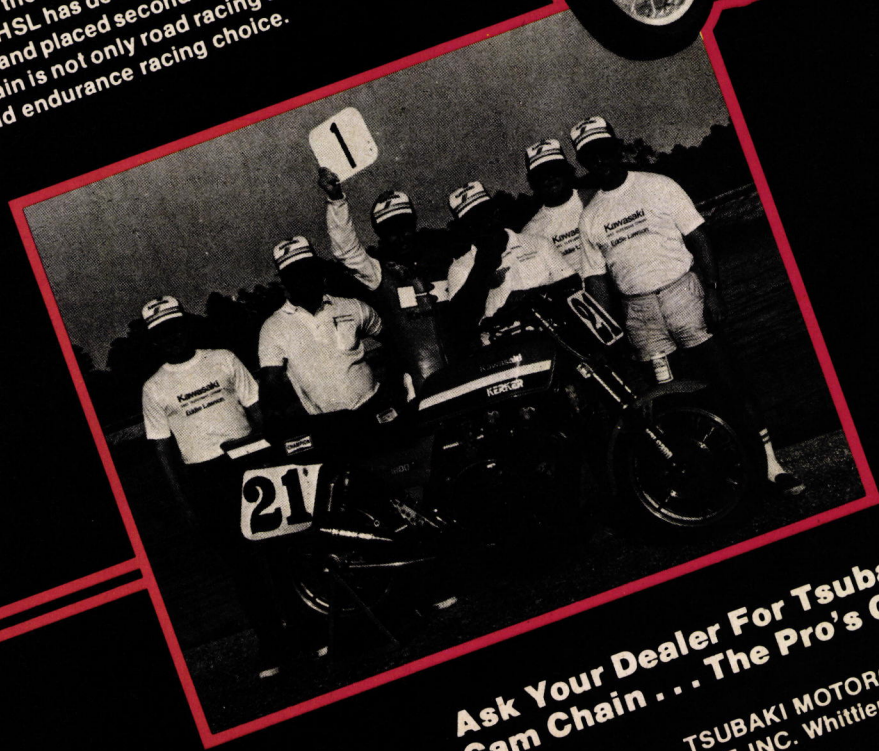


Team Kawasaki swept the Superbike competition for the 2nd year in a row, closing out the 7th and final year of A.M.A. 1000cc Superbike competition. Tsubaki HSL has delivered the incredible power for the winning effort 6 of 7 years, and placed second the remaining year. Tsubaki Heavy Duty Self Lube chain is not only road racing state of the art in the U.S. . . . it's also the world endurance racing choice.



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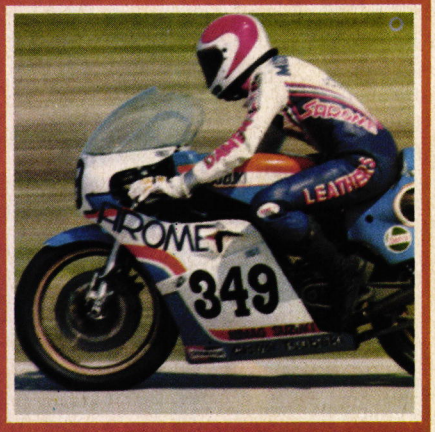

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Winners & Losers

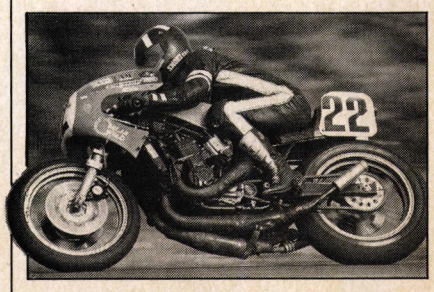
into the lead, and the win, it appeared, had been saved for Kawasaki—until he crashed. As Mathers explained, "The rain tires just greased-up from the heat when the track was dry, and they lost their stick, even in the rain."

Cooley left disappointed, but nonetheless sold on the old Superbike's abilities. Two weeks later he chose to ride it at Elkhart Lake, and put in a masterful ride on the dry Wisconsin track. But the two-strokes simply were faster on the long straights, and privateer Miles Baldwin won on a Yamaha TZ750, with Honda's RS500-mounted Fred Merkel second and another TZ-privateer, Nick Richichi, third. Cooley took fourth, but he learned a valuable lesson: "At first we considered it (the Superbike) a rainbike. But at Elkhart Lake we found out that it handles better than the F1 bike."

With that in mind, the Kawasaki team rode a new wave of optimism to Loudon, knowing the tight New Hampshire track would be well-suited to the large, agile Superbike. Cooley's confidence was polished by another fact. "The Superbike simply fit my style of riding; from the very beginning there were no changes to be made to it," he said. It was a bike that offered good handling and "great brakes." And for a rider with his talents, those are assets he could use to win, especially on a track such as Loudon.

As Mike Baldwin soon learned, Cooley and the Kawasaki team were right about the Superbike, and for eight laps the two riders shadowed one another. But exiting Turn Eight, Cooley fed the 150-horsepower engine too much throttle, and he slid to a crash.

Cooley was unhurt, but he didn't finish the race, and Baldwin skated to his second National win of the year. Kawasaki packed up and left, the dark cloud still overhead. They want it to follow them, but only if it opens up and rains like hell at the racetrack. Because it's going to take a thundershower to give the Superbike-turned-F1-racer the chance it needs to win against the faster two-strokes. *—Dain Gingerelli* ●



Miles Baldwin trudges to Elkhart victory

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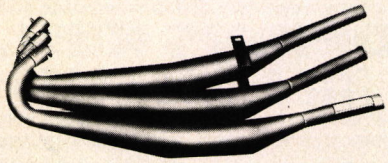

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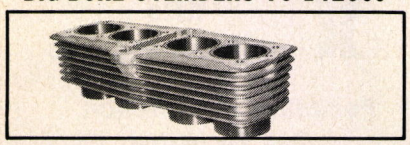

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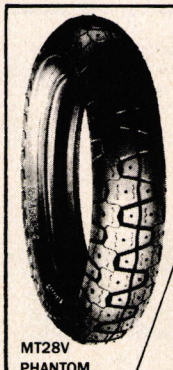

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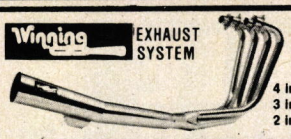

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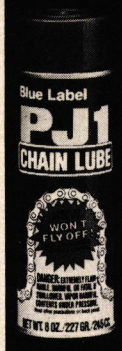

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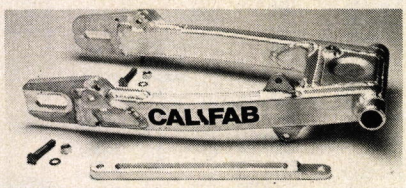

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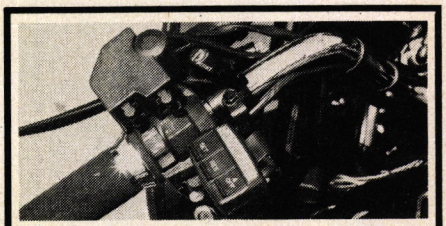

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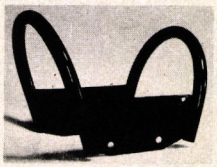

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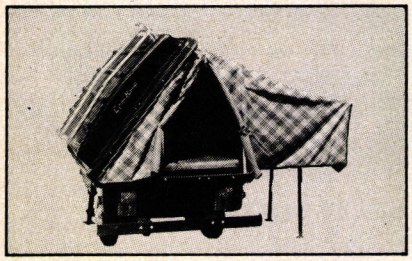

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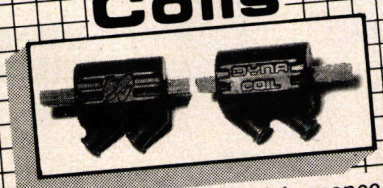

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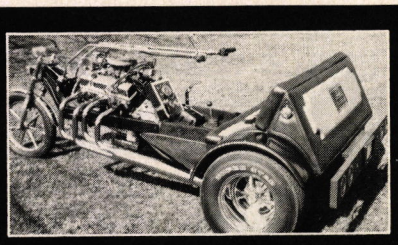

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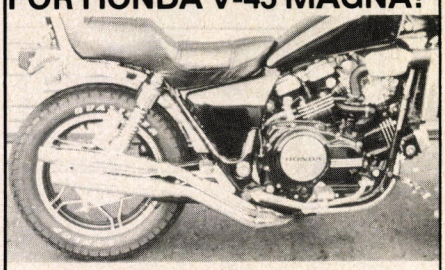

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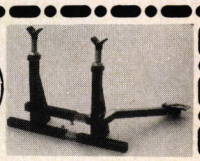

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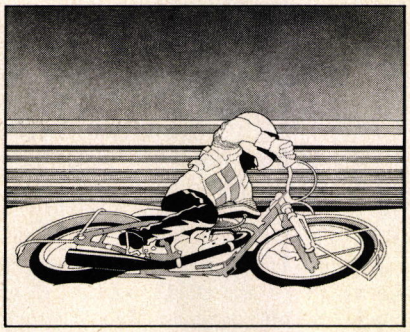
LETTERS *H-D, ITC and Two-stroke fever*

BLAME IT ON HERBERT HOOVER

This is in response to Larry Works' editorial in the June issue, in which he charges Harley-Davidson (i.e. their management) with being short-sighted.

The federal government killed Harley-Davidson as a thriving export business when, in the 1920s, a protectionist American tariff policy led to foreign governments raising their tariffs and pricing American motorcycles out of business overseas. At the time, H-D was the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer and sold almost half its production in foreign markets.

In the Thirties, the federal government and organized labor took a number of actions that increased costs and, therefore, caused Harley-Davidson to delay production expansion, delay introduction of new models and several times cancel new designs for smaller motorcycles. Thus, several hundred person-years of jobs were killed in the womb and Harley-Davidson was prevented from developing a full line of affordable motorcycles.



After World War II, a massive foreign-aid program reindustrialized Europe and Japan and, in effect, subsidized foreign motorcycle companies. Foreign governments continued to charge high tariffs against American motorcycles, while our government kept tariffs low on foreign motorcycles. The British government then devalued its currency, which lowered the already moderate prices of British motorcycles by 20 to 25 percent. Smaller, foreign motorcycles faced no American competition, due to the long-standing effect of labor costs which had killed development.

Organized labor continued to bid up union wages for the next generation, so Harley-Davidson never was able to effectively compete with the Japanese in the big-bucks segment of the market: small- and medium-displacement motorcycles. Meanwhile, the Japanese big four have never been impaired by an indifferent home government, severely harmed by foreign governments or threatened by an unfriendly labor force. Harley-Davidson's fall from world leader to struggler was caused by exactly such factors, and its opportunities for growth have been greatly constrained ever since by these uncontrollables.

Nevertheless, Harley-Davidson has survived to become the world's oldest motorcycle company. If it's short-sighted, it must be less-so than a number of famous transportation firms that have faced fewer problems, yet failed—Packard, MG, BSA, Curtiss-Wright aircraft—the list could go on.

It's ironic that Harley-Davidson is now enjoying a temporary protectionist tariff situation, since protectionism launched it on its long, downward jour-

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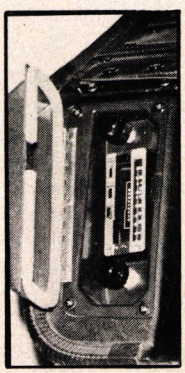

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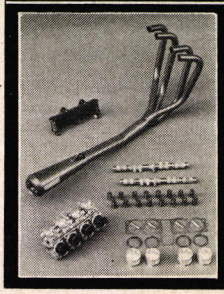

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ney. In the long haul, everyone's best interests are served by competition instead of protectionism, as the latter is simply the use of political force to grant favors to some Americans at the expense of other Americans. Until now, Harley-Davidson has been one of the many outsiders harmed by the favored few, the auto industry, big steel, and big oil, who for so long felt no threat of international competition.

Harley-Davidson—short-sighted? Hardly. But the policies of organized labor and their governmental allies are proving short-sighted, as all across the country unions are pricing their members out of jobs. In places like Detroit and Pittsburgh this is recent news, but in Milwaukee it's an old story.

Jerry W. Hatfield
Lancaster, California

Where were you when Chairman Beals was pitching his case to the I.T.C.?—ed.

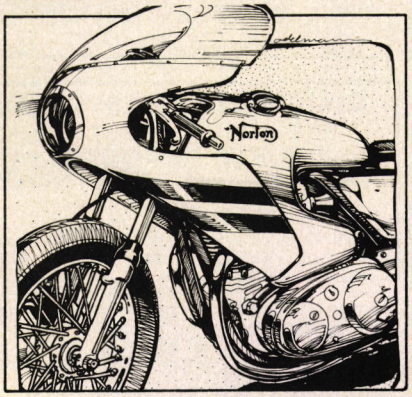
COINCIDENCE?

Your editorial on the ITC/Harley scandal is the only forthright statement on the subject I've seen in any of the bike magazines.

Simply put, Harleys are junk and that is why they aren't competitive. Price has nothing to do with it.

Jack Keough
Gig Harbor, Washington

But we didn't say Harleys are junk. You did—ed.



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INFLATION ADJUSTMENT

I see the ITC ruling and Reagan's tariff as a realistic adjustment of prices that reflect the times. Do you mean to tell me Japan is the only country not adjusting prices for inflation? It appears to be a created false-pricing market, forcing competition into oblivion or relegating it to obscurity. If this occurs, the Japanese could control the price, and then what choice would you have? The people that would lose are the ones that wouldn't own a GPz or Interceptor if you gave it to them. They would have to buy an LTD, Maxim or GS-L.

W.B. Hastings
Grants Pass, Oregon

Chairman Beals could have used you a few months ago, too—ed.

R.I.P.-OFF?

I don't have advertisers to worry about, so I'll say what's on the tip of many cyclists' tongues: What's wrong with Harley-Davidson going belly up? I'd love to be able to trot down to my local Harley shop and buy an American cycle. More important to me, however, is buying a quality, sophisticated machine. H-D stopped making those years ago, and it was its conscious decision to do so. Those of us who've grown out of our teens and have the bucks to spend are too sophisticated to buy the badass leather-boy image that H-D cultivates. The latest nonsense about taxing the big Japanese bikes to save Harley is the final straw. H-D has been making mediocre bikes for a declining market for years. If they don't have the will, or intelligence, to adapt to the onslaught of technology, may they rest in peace.

Lt. Steve Roach
Pensacola, Florida

ALL AMERICAN?

In the March issue the specifications chart in the test of the XLX-61 notes that the Harley uses some Japanese parts: 34mm Keihin carburetor, Showa front end and Showa shocks. Could you give me a rundown on lights, controls, chains, tires, brakes and anything else H-D uses that is imported?

When it comes to H-D, all I hear is "buy American." Since this ITC ruling is in effect, it seems funny they can't build or buy U.S.-made parts.

I'm 53, and started riding on an Indian Scout; since then I've ridden an H-D 45, Matchless 500, Velocettes and Triumphs. They were all great bikes for their day, but compared to today's Japanese bikes they are all junk.

I hope H-D sees the light and makes a machine that can do the job.

T.A. Martin
Atascadero, California

You haven't been listening, Martin. Harley says that's precisely the reason for its ITC petition—ed.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Perhaps Harley has lost sight of the market. Honda makes lawnmowers; why not Harley? People may be willing to buy a $7000, 1340cc lawncruiser. Riders

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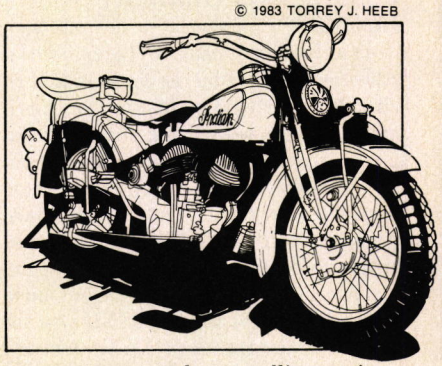


may not want to buy a rolling antique, but you know the grass keeps growing.

Dan G. Meyeer
S. New Berlin, New York

NOT ALL BAD

I agree with Ostarello in California. Harley's can't be beat when it comes to long-lasting machinery.

Just how many '69 305s are around and running? RD350s or 750 Fours? All "riceburners" are, and always will be, throwaway motorcycles. You put 10—25,000 miles on them and you can junk them after that. They just won't last.

You people always complain about how expensive Harleys are—just remember, when you buy an H-D, it's an investment. You can go ahead and buy Japanese bikes for $3,000–$4,000, but don't cry to us Harley riders 10 months later because it depreciated by half.

Eugene Price
Gainesville, Texas

From one extreme to the other, Price. The days of the "throwaway" Japanese bike, thankfully, are over—ed.

YOU'RE WELCOME

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Harley-Davidson for looking out for my motorcycling interests, to thank my government for raising my taxes; and you, CYCLE GUIDE, for telling it like it is.

John F. Harrold
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Okay—ed.

XL-ENT

I have to admit that, prior to the June '83 issue of CYCLE GUIDE, the only reason I read any cycle magazine was for the dirt tests. Not that I have anything against streetbikes. It's just that when looking through the pages, they all seem so alike. "Seen one, seen them all." Sort of like watching the Miss America Pageant and trying to pick the winner. They all have different hair and clothes, are different sizes and colors, but when you

stand back and look at them they are all the same.

That is until the Harley XLX. What a Walter Mitty machine! The thing just grabs you by the shirt and says, "Look at me! I'm different and proud of it!" It's an individual; it has a definite personality. Who cares if it doesn't have a digital gas gauge or stereo or electronic mirror defoggers. It has something none of the rest of the "high tech" bikes will ever have. It has charisma.

If I were a street rider, if I had $4500 and if I had room in my garage for another motorcycle, I'd definitely have an XLX. (The hell with the garage; I'd park it in the living room.)

Ed Whitney
Eldridge, Iowa

Take a tip from someone who owns an XLX: Put a drip-pan under it while admiring the machine in the living room. It'll keep your wife happy—ed.

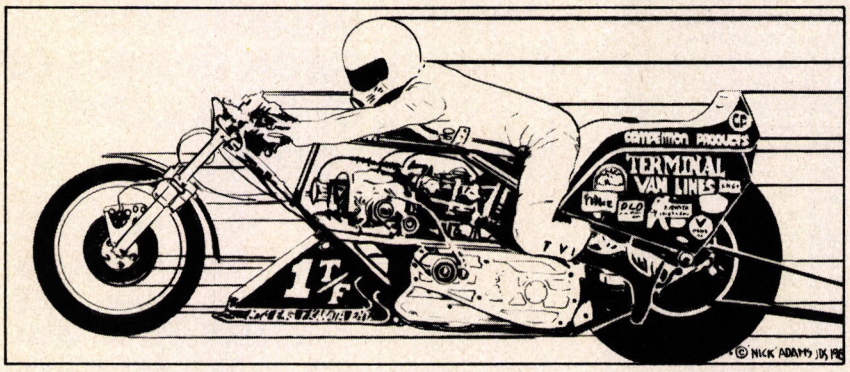
EVEN BETTER

Your article on the Harley XLX-61 was the most accurate, straightforward piece of journalism I have seen written on the new Sportster.

Contrary to what I was told prior to buying my '82 Sportster, it has not leaked a drop of oil, needed any tightening up nor had any of the problems people who never even sat on a Harley-Davidson warned about. Of all the motorcycles I have owned (nine), my Sportster hasn't been the smoothest or fastest, but I can say without any hesitation, it's been the most pleasurable. And after all, that's what motorcycling is all about.

F.E. James
Macon, Georgia

C'mon, yours doesn't leak even a little bit?—ed.



ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

Since I am an avid two-stroke fan, I was wondering if you could possibly do an article on some of the new hi-tech two-stroke sport bikes. I realize they would have to be imported, but I have noticed a few ads in some of the motorcycle magazines advertising importing services. I know there are many riders interested in these bikes, but there is so little information available in the U.S. on the bikes themselves, who imports them or where to find parts.

Tim Hanson
Kohler, Wisconsin

We must be thinking along the same lines. "Smuggler's Handbook" is just the beginning; wait and see what's coming up—ed. ●

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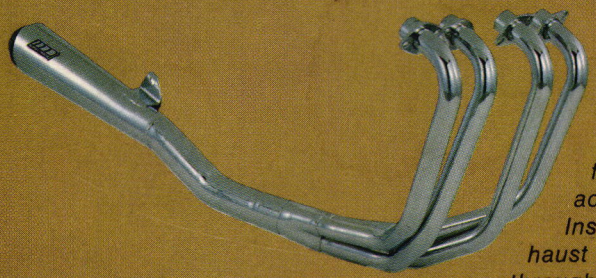

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